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ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Grief Reporting: A Print Media Content Analysis of the Gander, Newfoundland Air Disaster

Barbara Ann Goodno, Master of Arts, 1988

Thesis Directed by: Benjamin F. Holman, Professor, and Carl Sessions Stepp, Assistant Professor, College of Journalism

When reporting grief, the media are often regarded as an insensitive monolith. This study of grief reporting shows that print media reports of a shocked, angry and saddened society in the aftermath of a disaster correspond with predictable human responses and are not necessarily the sensationalized product of an adversarial press.

The study examined 117 news stories reporting the December 12, 1985 crash of a DC-8 jetliner in Gander, Newfoundland, Canada. All 256 on board, including 248 U.S. Army soldiers returning from peace-keeping duties in Egypt, were killed.

News stories printed in The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times and The Washington Post were compared to the five-stage human grief response observed by medical practitioners and sociologists (shock to anger to bargaining to depression to acceptance).

The analysis revealed a reporting pattern similar to the grief response. All five stages were observed and appeared progressively.

Of greatest significance was the limited appearance of stage five, acceptance. Although observed in each newspaper at various times, news stories reporting resolution to the loss were minuscule in comparison to earlier stories, which emphasized the shocking aspects of the catastrophe and the intense grieving that followed.

The failure to focus on resolution may, in fact, be the source of the media's poor reputation in regard to grief reporting. At a time when society is resolving its loss, the media typically highlight the next problem.

The media would benefit the reader if, in addition to highlighting new crises, they more effectively reported resolve to previous ones.



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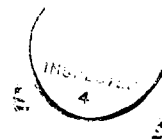
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GRIEF REPORTING: A PRINT MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF THE GANDER, NEWFOUNDLAND AIR DISASTER

by

Barbara Ann Goodno

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of The University of Maryland in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
1988

Advisory Committee:

Professor Maurine Beasley, Ph.D.
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Preface

This content analysis began as an examination of the media-military relationship in times of crises. (The relationship typically vacillates between symbiosis and adversity.) As a U.S. Army officer embarking on a career in public affairs, I'd hoped to shed new light on an oft-studied association.

At the outset of my research, however, I was struck by the emotions expressed in the news stories printed throughout the United States, and noted a pattern that I thought was remarkably reflective of grief recovery.

Thus, rather than focusing on the media-military relationship issue, I chose instead to examine the news product and measure how closely the print media reported the human response to loss.

This study breaks new ground, revealing what I believe is only one facet of grief reporting. I hope that it will become a catalyst to others for further, in-depth study.

Dedication

for dcg

Acknowledgements

Lieutenant Colonel Bruce M. Meisner
and Colonel F. William Smullen

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Chapter 1

Introduction

At 5:15 a.m., Eastern Standard Time, on December 12, 1985, an Arrow Air DC-8 jetliner crashed on takeoff after refueling at Canada's Gander International Airport in Gander, Newfoundland. All 248 passengers and the eight-member crew were killed.

The aircraft, chartered by the Multi-National Force and Observers, headquartered in Rome, Italy was hired to return soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The unit had just completed a six month peace keeping duty with the force in Egypt's Sinai desert.¹

The tragedy was the largest single-day loss of lives in years for the military and largest military air disaster in history. The soldiers left immediate families in 43 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, Panama and Federal Republic of Germany.²

News of the disaster was first broadcast on the radio approximately an hour after the crash. Live coverage by the Cable News Network (CNN) followed shortly thereafter. By day's end, and the five days that immediately followed, the Army conducted approximately 40 "on air, live telephonic spots" on a daily basis.³

The first hours after the crash, not unlike other disasters, were marked with confusion and uncertainty.

Today, some critical questions remain unanswered. Now, more than two years after the crash, the cause is still a matter of speculation. The Canadian Aviation Safety Board does not expect to officially announce its final determination until August or September, 1988.⁴

Purpose of Study

Tierney (1985) reported that in crises "loss is directly observable."⁵ How then did the media report their observations? Did any patterns emerge? As more information became available, did changes or modifications in reporting occur?

The purpose of this study is to examine print media content and measure similarities, if any, to the grief-recovery model observed by Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and others.

Print media was used exclusively for the study as the most convenient and comprehensive data source.

Although the electronic media, especially television, plays an important role in the communication of critical events, it wasn't included in the study because of the many nuances that require consideration; i.e., camera angle, news source, voice intonation, etc.

Nature of the Problem

Objectivity has long been held as the hallmark of responsible journalism. In addition to presenting "news free of the reporter's opinions or feelings,"⁶ this notion requires that a reporter write or tell what really happened rationally; incorporating fairness, balance and relevance.

The media have the power, however, to (deliberately or subconsciously) distort the facts of any event. The motivation might stem from an altruistic desire to manipulate a society for perceived greater good, monetary gain, or power.

For example, during what is now known as the Malvinas War, British correspondents with the BBC agreed to report only that which the task force commander would allow.

The BBC correspondent with the task force, Brian Hanrahan, testified to the parliamentary inquiry that the British commander, Admiral John Woodward, told reporters he intended to use the media 'to cause as much confusion to the enemy as possible.' The newsmen reached an agreement with him, according to Hanrahan, 'where he was entitled to stop us reporting things, but we were not prepared to report things that were incorrect.'⁷

There are those who will argue, with some validity, the inherent differences between the American and British press. "The British press accepts a far greater amount

of government secrecy and news manipulation than American or foreign newsmen would put up with in Washington.'"⁸

Critics frequently accuse the media of sensationalizing the news, claiming that media activity is motivated by a strict profit motive. However, allegations that 'if it bleeds, it leads' or 'if it smells, it sells,' are not new, nor necessarily unfounded.

For example, studies of Civil War photographs have revealed a high likelihood of misrepresentation⁹ and the use of living soldiers for theatrical poses of the war dead¹⁰ in order to dramatize or punctuate the so-called death scenes.

In defense of the photographers, researcher William Frassanito proposed greater sensitivity to the situation.

"... We must remember that he was, above all, a photographer and a businessman--not a professional historian."¹¹

The media have also been accused of inciting political crises. As a case in point, Steven Fink notes William Randolph Hearst's

... classic 'yellow journalism' cable he had sent to Cuba to cover the then non-existent Spanish-American War. Receiving the illustrator's cable that there was no war to be found, Hearst wired back, 'You supply the pictures, I'll supply the war.'¹²

Most researchers agree, however, that the modern American press adheres to a much higher standard than it

did in its early years. It is not easily manipulated by outside forces and it provides an accurate representation of the facts.

News Reporting is a Patterned Activity

The first newspapers published in the United States were highly partisan. However, as early as 1835, a new standard was emerging. In a prospectus to the New York Daily News, James Gordon Bennet advised reporters to set aside the subjective viewpoint.

"We shall endeavor to record facts on every public and proper subject, stripped of verbiage and coloring."¹³

In more recent times, however, researchers have shown, that absolute objectivity is impossible. The news is not a neutral product.¹⁴

Lippmann (1922) said

... Every newspaper when it reaches the reader is the result of whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what position they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, what emphasis each shall have. There are no objectives here. There are conventions.¹⁵

Ranney (1983) showed that the conventions of television journalism are further constrained by economics, time and space.¹⁶ The print media bear a similar burden.

Gans (1979) revealed that locating credible,

available sources further encumbers an already complex process.¹⁷

Gitlin (1980) reported that media conventions distort images by emphasizing certain themes and scanting others through the use of framing devices.¹⁸

In short, the media were far from mirrors passively reflecting facts found in the real world. The facts reported were out there in the real world, true: out there among others. The media reflection was more the active patterned remaking performed by mirrors in a fun house.¹⁹

Molotch and Lester (1974) described the news commodity as the outgrowth of a symbiotic trinity between three major agencies: the news promoters, the news assemblers, and the news consumers.²⁰

Tuchman (1972) observed the patterns of reporting and described the notion of objectivity as a "strategic ritual" composed of three parts: form, interorganizational relationships, and content. Patterns and strategies used by journalists, she said, were necessitated primarily by time pressures.²¹

"A reporter generally has less than one working day to familiarize himself with a story's background, gather information, and to write his assignment."²²

As a consequence, the sheer volume of information requires the media to routinize the non-routine, formulating a process that is

... so speedy and habitual as to seem almost instinctive. There is simply too much possible material; there have to be ... devices to select what shall be shown, in what order, at what length and with what stress.²³

Thus, performing the primary function of news reporting, as defined by the American Society of News Editors, communicating "to the human race, what its members do, feel and think,"²⁴ results in a product that is patterned and predictable.

Gans (1979) said that "journalists try very hard to be objective," but patterns based on ingrained values are not only inevitable, but essential.²⁵

... Enduring values ... are values which can be found in many different types of news stories over a long period of time, often, they affect what events become news for some are part and parcel of the definition of news.

Enduring values are not timeless, and they may change somewhat over the years, moreover, they also help to shape opinions, and many times, opinions are only specifications of enduring values.²⁶

Gans noted that journalistic reporting does not mirror events, but claimed the theory is useful. "... It reminds us that journalists do not make up the news but begin with what they deem an empirically graspable external reality."²⁷

There is news ripe for reporting. "Each day there are stories to be told because every day there is business to be done...."²⁸

Footnotes

¹According to a December 12, 1985 Department of Defense Memorandum for Correspondents, the Multinational Force and Observers "is an international organization supported financially by Egypt, Israel and the U.S. There are ten countries that provide troops to the M.F.O.: Australia, Columbia, Fiji, France, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, U.S. and Uruguay."

²U.S. Army After Action Report, undated, p. 1.

³Ibid., p. 91.

⁴Telephone interview with Tom Hinton, Director of Investigations, Canadian Aviation Safety Board, November 20, 1987.

⁵Kathleen J. Tierney, "Emergency Medical Preparedness and Response in Disasters: The Need for Interorganizational Coordination, Public Administration Review, 45 (January 1985) : 16.

⁶Melvin Mencher, News Reporting and Writing, (DuBuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, Publishers, 1984), p. 62.

⁷Leonard Downie, Jr., "How Britain Managed The News," in Impact Of Mass Media, ed. Ray Eldon Hiebert and Carol Reuss, (New York: Longman, 1985), p. 353.

⁸Ibid., p. 353.

⁹William A. Frassanito, Gettysburg: A Journey In Time, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), pp. 175-181.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 185.

¹¹Ibid., p. 175.

¹²Steven Fink, Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable, (New York: American Management Association, 1986), p. 120.

¹³Dan Shiller, Objectivity and the News, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 87.

¹⁴Richard Hoggart, Bad News, ed. Richard Hoggart, (Glasgow: n.p., 1976), p. 10.

¹⁵Walter Lippmann, "Newspapers" in Media Power in Politics, ed. Doris A. Graber, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1984), p. 73.

¹⁶Austin Ranney, Channels of Power: the impact of television on American politics, (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 43-49.

¹⁷Herbert Gans, Deciding What's News, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), p. 81.

¹⁸Todd Gitlin, The Whole World Is Watching, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1980), p. 27.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 29.

²⁰Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "News As Purposive Behavior: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents, and Scandals," American Sociological Review, 39 (1974) : 101-112, p. 104.

²¹Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notion of Objectivity," American Journal of Sociology, 77 (January 1972) : 660-79, pp. 665-670.

²²Ibid., 662.

²³Ibid., Hoggart, p. X.

²⁴Gerald Gross, The Responsibility of the Press. (New York: Fleet Publishing Corp., 1966), p. 405.

²⁵Ibid., Gans, pp. 39-40.

²⁶Ibid., p. 41.

²⁷Ibid., p. 79.

²⁸James W. Carey, "The Dark Continent of American Journalism," in Reading the News, ed. Robert Karl Manhoff and Michael Schudson, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 166.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Crisis and Grief Reporting

The study of crisis and grief reporting is limited, but Molotch and Lester (1974) showed that accident reporting and routine reporting are inherently different.

... The suddenness of the accident and its unanticipated nature means that event makers are initially not ready and thus the powerful could give uncoordinated, mutually contradictory accounts. This process of accidental disruption, followed by attempts to restore traditional meanings can be observed empirically; and thus we take accidents to constitute a crucial resource for the empirical study of event-structuring processes."¹

They note that, like routine news events, not all accidents are reported. Some specific events, such as the 1969 massive escape of nerve gas at Dugway Proving Ground, "could easily be conceived as far more disastrous to the natural environment and to human life ...; yet again relatively little coverage occurred."²

Crisis reporting sometimes creates circumstances other reporters rarely encounter. Stephens and Edison (1982) found that science reporters covering the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant disaster faced new pressures. While reporting the event, their roles

changed. They were no longer pure observers; they became players accountable for their actions.

Residents of the area monitored news reports for hints on whether to flee. Overly alarming coverage could have spread panic; overly reassuring coverage could have risked lives. This was science reporting under the gun.³

Researchers have done at least fifteen news diffusion studies relating to life threatening events involving U.S. political leaders.⁴ Several have focused on grief.

Sheatslely and Feldman (1964) investigated reactions to the assassination of President Kennedy.

The assassination generally evoked feelings similar to those felt at the death of close friend or relative....

Since people responded to the assassination in personal terms, their reactions appear to have followed a well-defined pattern of grief familiar to medical practice: an initial phase of shock and disbelief; a developing awareness of the loss coupled with feeling of sadness, sorrow, shame, and anger; the onset of physical symptoms such as tears, tenseness, sleeplessness, fatigue, and loss of appetite; and finally a gradual recovery in the course of which these symptoms disappear and a normal state of well-being is re-established.⁵

Banta (1964) reported similar strong emotional responses.

Thirty four percent reported that they were 'extremely angry about the news', 27 percent said they felt 'extremely nervous and excited about the news,' 10 percent cried when they heard the news, and 8 percent said that their reaction was to joke nervously about the news.⁶

Since 1963, critical events such as the Kennedy assassination have become more a norm than aberration. The images of crime, war, and international terrorism have become the daily fare for the newspaper reader and television viewer. The result, some critics say, is a desensitized public⁷ and a trivialized event.⁸

Jeffres and Quarles' (1982) research found, however, that after the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II, 66 percent of the sample verbalized "such profound emotional reactions as shock, anger, sorrow, depression or sadness."⁹

They concluded that despite nearly two decades of pervasive violence, the American citizen's capacity to respond emotionally to critical events remains quite high.¹⁰

Reports of loss can have an unpredictable response, however. The most anthologized work of war correspondent Ernie Pyle, for example, is the deeply moving account of the events that followed the death of infantryman Captain Henry Waskow. Although his story creates a sense of intense sorrow, there is no evidence of great public outcry against Pyle or the news service for which he wrote.¹¹ (Illustration 1, page 14)

In contrast, after the terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, reporters were labeled "ghouls,"¹² even though many family members asked

ERNIE PYLE

The Death of the Captain

His Work is His Memorial

Though Ernie Pyle's columns were many and were cherished by many, "The Death of the Captain" is most frequently referred to as his finest. It follows.

In this war I have known a lot of officers who were loved and respected by the soldiers under them. But never have I crossed the trail of any man as beloved as Capt. Henry T. Waskow, of Beaton, Texas.

Capt. Waskow was a company commander in the 36th Division. He had led his company since long before it left the states. He was very young, only in his middle twenties, but he carried in him a sincerity and a gentleness that made people want to be guided by him.

"After my father, he came next," a sergeant told me.

"He always looked after us," a soldier said. "He'd go to bat for us every time."

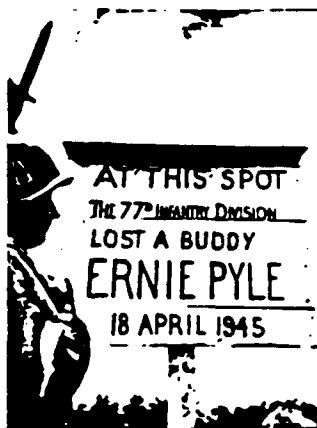
"I've never known him to do anything unfair," another said.

I was at the foot of the mule trail the night they brought Capt. Waskow down. The moon was nearly full, and you could see far up the trail, and even partway across the valley below.

Dead men had been coming down the mountain all evening, lashed onto the backs of mules. They came lying belly-down across the wooden pecksaddles, their heads hanging down on one side, their stiffened legs sticking out awkwardly from the other, jolting up and down as the mules walked.

The Italian mule skinnners were afraid to walk beside dead men, so Americans had to lead the mules down that night. Even the Americans were reluctant to unlash and lift off the bodies when they got to the bottom, so an officer had to do it himself and ask others to help.

I don't know who that first one was. You feel small in the presence of dead men, and you don't ask silly questions. They slid



This is how the 77th Infantry Division marked the passing of their friend.

him down from the mule, and stood him on his feet for a moment. In the half-light he might have been merely a sick man standing there leaning on the others. Then they laid him on the ground in the shadow of the stone wall alongside the road.

We left him there beside the road, that first one, and we all went back into the cowshed and set on water cans or lay on the straw, waiting for the next batch of mules.

Somebody said the dead soldiers had been dead for four days, and then nobody said anything more about it. We talked soldier talk for an hour or more; the dead man lay all alone, outside in the shadow of the wall.

Then a soldier came into the cowshed and said there were more bodies outside.

We went out into the road. Four mules stood there in the moonlight, in the road where the trail came down off the mountain. The soldiers who led them stood there watching.

"This one is Capt. Waskow," one of them said quietly.

Two men unlash his body from the mule and lifted it off and laid it in the shadow beside the stone wall. Other men took the other bodies off. Finally, there were five lying end to end in a long row. You don't cover up dead men in the combat zones. They just lie there in the shadows until somebody comes after them.

The unburdened mules moved off to their olive grove. The men in the road seemed reluctant to leave. They stood around, and gradually I could sense them moving, one by one, close to Capt. Waskow's body. Not so much to look, I think, as to say something in finality to him and to themselves.

One soldier came and looked down and he said out loud, "God damn it."

Another man came, I think he was an officer. It was hard to tell officers from men in the dim light, for everybody was bearded and grimy. The man looked down into the dead captain's face and then spoke directly to him, as though he were alive, "I'm sorry, old man."

Then a soldier came and stood beside the officer and bent over, and he, too, spoke to his dead captain, not in a whisper but softly tenderly, and said, "I sure am sorry, sir."

Then the first man squatted down, and he reached down and took the captain's hand, and he sat there for a full five minutes holding the dead hand in his own and looking intently into the dead face. And he never uttered a sound all the time he sat there.

Finally he put the hand down. He reached over and gently straightened the points of the captain's shirt collar, and then he sort of rearranged the torn edges of the uniform around the wound, and then he got up and walked away down the road in the moonlight, all alone.

The rest of us went back into the cowshed.

to be interviewed¹⁴ and others claimed the experience was therapeutic.¹⁵

James J. Langon III of Lakehurst, New Jersey lost a son in the terrorist attack. "You hear a lot of criticism of the press," he said. "But in my case, they conducted themselves very well. With no exceptions, at the end of the conversations I had with reporters, they all set their jobs aside and we talked as people. I really appreciated that."¹⁶

Thanatology

Thanatology, "the secular study of death and life-threatening behavior,"¹⁷ is a relatively new field of study.

Sigmund Freud may have been the first to study grief and bereavement behavior ("Mourning and Melancholia")¹⁸, but Dr. Erich Lindemann (1944) is credited with conducting the "first systemic study of bereavement."¹⁹

Lindemann observed that the "picture shown by persons in acute grief is remarkably uniform."²⁰

He observed five patterns that seemed "to be pathogenic for grief": 1) Somatic distress, 2) Preoccupation with the image of the deceased, 3) guilt, 4) hostile reactions, and 5) loss of patterns of conduct.²¹

Lindemann noted that the duration of the grief

response varied from person to person,

"[depending] upon the success with which a person does the grief work, namely emancipation from bondage to the deceased, readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing, and the formation of new relationships. One of the big obstacles to this work seems to be the fact that many patients try to avoid the intense distress connected with the grief experience and to avoid the expression of emotion necessary for it."²²

In the past twenty-five years, thanatology has become "almost a sub-specialty of psychiatry. ... It has already become a branch of social psychology and anthropology."²³

Studies, pioneered by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) revealed patterns similar to those observed by Lindemann. She noted that grief patterns of the terminally ill and their family members are remarkably similar.²⁴ Ross observed, as Lindemann had a quarter of a century earlier, that grief patterns share a commonality.

The grief patterns described by Dr. Ross in her book, On Death and Dying, are summarized by Hans O. Mauksch at Figure 1, page 17.

Another researcher, Doyle (1980), described a similar three stage pattern of grief: shock, intense emotion, and adjustment (Figure 2, page 18).²⁵ Her model differs from Ross' in that she focuses solely on bereaved family members.

Doyle confirmed the necessity of the grief process. In order to reach stage three, adjustment, the bereaved

"1. Denial--'No, not me.' This is a typical reaction when a patient learns that he or she is terminally ill. Denial, says Doctor Ross, is important and necessary. It helps cushion the impact of the patients's awareness that death is inevitable.

2. Rage and anger--'Why me?' The patient resents the fact that others will remain healthy and live while he or she must die. God is a special target for anger, since He is regarded as imposing arbitrarily, the death sentence. To those who are shocked at her claim that such anger is not only permissible but inevitable, Doctor Ross replies succinctly, 'God can take it.'

3. Bargaining--'Yes me, but...' Patients accept the fact of death but strike bargains for more time. Mostly they bargain with God--'even among people who never talked with God before.'

They promise to be good or to do something in exchange for another week or month or year of life. Notes Doctor Ross: 'What they promise is totally irrelevant, because they don't keep their promises anyway.'

4. Depression--'Yes, me.' First, the person mourns past losses, things not done, wrongs committed. But then he or she enters a state of 'preparatory grief,' getting ready for the arrival of death. The patient grows quiet, doesn't want visitors. 'When a dying patient doesn't want to see you any more,' says Doctor Ross, 'this is a sign he has finished his unfinished business with you, and it is a blessing. He can now let go peacefully.'

5. Acceptance--'My time is very close now and it's all right.' Doctor Ross describes this final stage a not a happy stage, but neither is it unhappy. It's devoid of feelings but it's not resignation, it's really a victory.'"²⁸

The Ross Grief Recovery Model

Figure 1

Stage one, shock consists of:

... protest, anger and disbelief, ...
usually [lasting] from the occurrence of death
until the disposal of the body.

The second stage is one of intense emotion.

There is no norm for its duration. The
bereaved has disturbed and restless sleep,
often with vivid dreams or nightmares; ... loss
of appetite and weight.

These symptoms are accompanied by much
weeping, sighing, hand wringing, brushing the
hand across the brow, exhaustion and a lump in
the throat that often makes speech difficult.

Stage three is the period of final adaptation.

Sleep and weight are stabilized and
interest is again directed outward. The
bereaved can now speak of the deceased without
bursting into tears. He has resumed his daily
routine and can perform ordinary
responsibilities satisfactorily.²⁷

The Doyle Grief Recovery Model

Figure 2

must completely work through the first two stages. Final adaptation can be complicated and arrested if the bereaved "become sunk in a morass of anger, depression, guilt, anxiety or perturbation,"²⁸ what Ross defines as "unfinished business."²⁹

Some religions provide the bereaved with a specific framework, intended to draw the mourner from "temporary isolation to increasingly larger personal and communal responsibilities and involvement...."³⁰

Judaism recognizes that there are levels and stages of grief and so it organizes the year of mourning into three days of grief; seven days of mourning, thirty days of gradual readjustment, and eleven months of remembering and healing.³¹

Social worker Lily Pincus, however, regards bereavement as very much a personal process, taking on different forms for different people.³² She advises cautious application of any grief-recovery model. Others quickly note the same point.

"An individual may repeat stages, skip some, or have stages occur simultaneously. The order, intensity, and duration also vary from person to person."³³

Schacter (1986) observed, however, that grief emotions are manifested for nearly everyone, "even when the death may have been expected."³⁴

Further, grief recovery is not limited to death; a myriad of circumstances can cause the need for grief

recovery. One might mourn the loss of a friendship, a marriage; even intangibles, such as loss of status.³⁵

Researchers suggest, however, that one of the single greatest coping experience is sudden death, especially when identification of the remains is delayed or the body mutilated, as in the case of the passengers and crew on the chartered Arrow Air DC-8.

Where there is sudden death and nonrecovery of the body, such as in drownings, military deaths, ... the bereaved can be stuck at the first level for a long time.... The fact that the bereaved has not seen the concrete evidence of the dead body allows him to fantasize that the person is not really dead, that this event did not happen.³⁶

Parkes and Weiss (1983) indicate further that reactions to unanticipated deaths are more intense than situations when family and friends have been prepared for death through a long illness or old age.

... People who are suddenly and unexpectedly bereaved will react more severely than those whose bereavement was anticipated because the latter started their grieving earlier.... [They] did not disbelieve what they were told, but they were unable to grasp its full implications. They seemed to be warding off unbearable mental pain. As they came to accept the reality of their loss, they entered into deep intense grief."³⁷

Following the bereavement period, (Schucter, 1986) certain incidents, such as birthdays, holidays, wedding anniversaries, and other significant events shared with the deceased, especially the date of death, might trigger a reactivation of grieving.³⁸

The symbolism of the occasion reawakens painful feelings that may have been successfully suppressed for weeks and months. The anniversary date of the spouse's death can be a particularly evocative time, especially the first few years, bringing vivid memories of the time of death. It can be like reliving the trauma.³⁹

Despite the pain, however, in order to recover, the grief work must be done.

The person must recover from the initial shock, must eventually stop denying the unfortunate event, and must endure the sadness and the depression before coming to a full acceptance of reality and beginning to reconstruct his/her life.⁴⁰

Hypotheses to be Tested

Hypothesis 1: Print media accounts of the Arrow Air crash will demonstrate a pattern of sequenced reporting with a focus changing from shock to anger to bargaining to depression to acceptance. (Figure 3, page 22)

Hypothesis 2: Emotions reflecting anger will be most intense after the remains of all the victims have been identified and returned to the next-of-kin.

Hypothesis 3: The number and length of news stories will diminish over time and stop; however, the media will again focus on the event on or about the anniversary of the crash.

Shock and denial--"No, not my-- spouse, son, daughter, friend. There must be some mistake."

Rage and anger--"Why my -- spouse, son, daughter, friend? Why now? Why not someone else?" Anger might be directed toward God, the president as commander-in-chief, the Army, the pilot of the aircraft, those who chartered the aircraft, those responsible for ensuring compliance with federal aviation safety guidelines, and so on.

Bargaining--"Yes maybe, but let it be a mistake. Let there be survivors."

Depression--"Yes, it really happened." Like the terminally ill patient, the survivor might mourn past losses, things not done, wrongs committed, and unresolved differences.

Acceptance--"It really happened and I'm all right. I can go on."

Figure 3

Footnotes

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²²Ibid., p. 143.

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²⁴Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, To Live Until We Say Goodbye, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978), pp. 43-75.

²⁵Polly Doyle, Grief Counseling and Sudden Death: A Manual and Guide, (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1980), pp. 13-24.

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²⁸Ibid., p. 24.

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³⁰Audrey Gordon, "The Jewish View of Death: Guidelines for Mourning," ed. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Death: The Final Stage of Growth, p. 51.

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Chapter 3

Methodology

The content of The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times and The Washington Post was selected for analysis. Each newspaper enjoys a reputation as a responsible, authoritative publication.

In addition, the Los Angeles Times was selected for a west coast perspective, and the Washington Post was selected for its close proximity to the policy making bodies of the federal government; i.e., the president, the military, and federal agencies such as the Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board.

News articles were identified for analysis by a manual search of the newspapers' respective indices. The parameters for the search were December 13, 1985 through May 31, 1987.

Call words and phrases used for the search varied with the individual cataloging methods of each publication. They are as follows:

The Los Angeles Times--Airlines and Airplanes, Arrow Air, Armed forces, and Aircraft (military).

The New York Times--Airlines and Airplanes, Deaths, and Crises.

The Washington Post--Aeronautics-accidents, Defense contracts, and Military maneuvers.

The search identified a total of 117 news stories, 46 photos, five diagrams and two editorials related to the air disaster and its aftermath.

The Los Angeles Times

(December 13, 1985-October 13, 1986)

32 News stories

12 Photographs

1 Diagram

1 Editorial

The New York Times

(December 13, 1985-April 4, 1987)

51 News stories

18 Photographs

1 Diagram

The Washington Post

(December 13, 1985-December 5, 1986)

34 News stories

16 Photographs

3 Diagrams

1 Editorial

The titles of the news stories and their respective pages are listed in the Appendix, pages 99-113.

Procedure

Ross' five-stage grief-recovery model: shock, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance was used to generate the framework for analysis.

The literature review revealed no earlier research of news reporting and grief recovery. Thus, in the absence of a measurement tool, this researcher developed verbal representations for each grief stage (Figure 4, page 30) and behaviorally observed, associated characteristics (Figure 5, pages 31 and 32).

The verbal representations and associated characteristics were adapted for use in this study from previous research done by Doyle, Lindemann, Pincus and Ross.

The associated characteristics were developed to facilitate analysis, since the visual picture presented in a news story might show one of the five stages, but not state it out-right.

For example, a reporter might write, 'many of those attending the meeting seemed dazed by the news,' or quote a source who says, 'I don't feel anything right now; I'm just numb all over.' In both cases, the appropriate coding is number one, stage one, numbness.

There are also some very narrow distinctions between several of the codes within grief stages. These

<u>Stage 1</u> <u>Shock</u>	<u>Stage 2</u> <u>Anger</u>	<u>Stage 3</u> <u>Bargaining</u>	<u>Stage 4</u> <u>Depression</u>	<u>Stage 5</u> <u>Acceptance</u>
1 numbness	8 fault-	16 missed	18 helplessness	26 resolution
2 yearning	finding	flights	19 disorien-	27 optimism
3 denial	9 intense	17 hope for	tation	28 involvement
4 disbelief	emotion	survivors	20 weeping	
5 anxiety	10 blame		21 sighing	
6 bewilderment	11 guilt		22 hand-	
7 fantasy	12 agitation		wringing	
	13 distress		23 despair	
	14 protest		24 sadness	
	15 hostility		25 choked-up	
	16 irritability			

Grief Recovery Stages and Codes

Figure 4

<u>Code</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>
1) numbness	loss of sensation: going through the motions
2) yearning	longing, deep desire for return to status quo
3) denial	refusal to believe the truth, facts
4) disbelief	reluctance to believe the truth; facts (the distinction between disbelief and denial is narrow)
5) anxiety	distress, uncertainty about the future
6) bewilderment	thoroughly confused
7) fantasy	images of the deceased
8) fault finding	petty criticism
9) intense emotion	rage, hysteria
10) blame	to hold someone responsible
11) guilt	feeling responsible for wrongdoing
12) agitation	general nervousness, feeling uneasy, easily irritated
13) distress	severe strain resulting from exhaustion
14) protest	strong objection to explanation(s)
15) hostility	general antagonism

Coding Guide

Figure 5

<u>Code</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>
16) missed flight	expressed as hope that friends and or family may have missed the flight or were incorrectly listed on the flight manifest
17) hope for survivors	strong desire that the deceased survived the crash
18) helplessness	inability to manage alone; without power or strength
19) disorientation	without a sense of direction
20) weeping	tearful, any manifestation of tears or crying
21) sighing	sighing; deep breathing
22) hand wringing	hand wringing
23) despair	total loss of hope; feelings of failure
24) sadness	expressions of dejection, unhappiness
25) choked-up	tightness of throat
26) resolution	plans for the future, resolve to go on, despite the loss
27) optimism	belief that the situation is improving;
28) involvement	return to mainstream activities

Coding Guide (Cont.)

Figure 5

distinctions may not be necessary in the final analysis, but were developed in this manner to determine the degree of intensity, if any, of the studied responses.

Each news story was read by this researcher. Notation of the story's length and location was made. When the content of the story depicted any of the 28 criteria, it was appropriately coded and recorded. Corresponding quotations were recorded separately for subsequent reviews, cross-checking and verification.

The analysis did not differentiate between reporter and source material. Although the distinction may be of interest to a study of this nature, the product; i.e., the actual story printed, is most important, not the editorial process.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

Hypothesis 1

"Print media accounts of the Arrow Air crash will demonstrate a pattern of sequenced reporting with a focus changing from shock to anger to bargaining to depression to acceptance."

This study revealed that print media reports of crisis and its aftermath match in a general way the stages of grief recovery observed by medical practitioners and sociologists.

The pattern that emerged was similar to the Ross model: shock, to anger (with depression), to depression, to acceptance (with anger), to anger.

Stages	Number of Observations
Stage 1, Shock	21
Stage 2, Anger	66
Stage 3, Bargaining	8
Stage 4, Depression	46
Stage 5, Acceptance	7

Analysis Results for 117 New Stories

Figure 6

Stage 1, shock, was observed in 21 instances of the 117 stories analyzed. It was seen primarily in the first five days following the accident. On several occasions thereafter, the responses reappeared. In these cases, the responses were either first-time reactions to the news of the accident or a recollection of previously felt emotions.

Most typically the actual words, 'shock' and 'disbelief' were specifically used.

For example, Bill Peterson, reporting for The Washington Post, described many stage one responses:

They greeted the news with quiet disbelief. There was no hysteria, Army spokesmen said.

... a sense of shock invaded this base....

'It's a blow,' said bartender Charles Keese, who retired after 27 years in the Army. 'You see a lot of death [in the military] but in peacetime it is shocking.' '... It's pretty bad,' he said. 'I can hardly believe it.'

Stage 2, anger, appeared frequently throughout the analysis period; 66 instances of the 117 analyzed stories. Expressed largely as fault finding and blame, anger was initially aimed in multiple directions--the pilot of the aircraft, the airline, the military, policies directing the use of civilian charters for transport of military personnel, competition and the low-bid system for government contracts, and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Although the plane was chartered by the

Multinational Force and Observers, headquartered in Rome, there was no evidence of anger targeted toward that organization.

After the December 16th memorial service, and for the duration of the reporting thereafter, anger was the preponderant stage observed. This anger was primarily directed toward the airline, which, as more information became available, appeared to be culpable.

The Army was also the recipient of anger during the lengthy process of identification of the victims' remains (Illustration 2), but once the remains of the last soldier was interred, anger was focused primarily on Arrow Air.

Stage 3, bargaining, was observed eight times and only in the first five days of news reporting. Although grief recovery is very much an individualized process, it is noteworthy that there was so little evidence of this stage.

According to Doyle, when deaths are unexpected and the bodies not recovered, the bereaved can "be stuck" at this level for a long time. The lack of concrete evidence allows him or her to fantasize that the person is not really dead.²

The media, I believe, played a critical role in dispelling the hopes for survivors through its description of the stark realities of the crash scene.

ID of Crash Victims a Tedious Process

Missing Medical Records Hamper Army Pathologists

By Norman Reed
Associated Press

Despite problems involving missing medical and dental records, Army officials expressed confidence yesterday that virtually all of the 249 soldiers killed in a jetliner crash last month will ultimately be identified for burial by their families.

The service, in a brief written statement, acknowledged that identification of bodies from the Dec. 12 crash at Gander, Newfoundland, had turned into a tedious process and that only 115 identifications have been made.

"Authorities are hopeful that

modern identification procedures will make it possible to identify all but a few of the soldiers," it added. "Such procedures are time-consuming, and it may be months before final determinations are made."

The soldiers, members of the 101st Airborne Division, were returning to Fort Campbell, Ky., from Cairo after six months of peace-keeping duty in the Sinai Desert.

Officials said reports that the Army was considering mass burial of unidentified remains had caused distress among many family members, suggesting that identification efforts were ending.

"What we're saying to these families is we're not going to stop trying to identify their loved ones until there's absolutely nothing else we can do," said one official, who asked not to be identified.

"As of this date, the remains of 115 soldiers and five crew members killed in the Gander crash have been positively identified for burial," the Army statement said.

It said remains that cannot be identified "will be accorded group burial with full military honors at an appropriate national cemetery. Army authorities hope that such action will not be found necessary,"

The Army acknowledged shortly after the crash that, although regulations prohibited it, many of the troops had their medical and dental records on the plane. Army spokeswoman Elaine Ilverson said the Army is investigating.

She said duplicate records were obtained from other bases or from families for many of the dead and that the major problem was the accuracy of the crash and fire.

The chartered Arrow Air DC8 was fully fueled when it crashed on takeoff, touching off an explosion and burning most victims beyond recognition.

Severe winter weather has hampered the recovery of remains and personal effects. Earlier this week, a team of Army specialists was dispatched to Gander to join Canadian authorities to expand the ground search.

The Washington Post, January 11, 1986

Illustration 2

Family members, who might have otherwise been without the facts surrounding the disaster, had real-time information.

The media, then, through its descriptive accounts of the accident scene, may have reduced the amount of psychological bargaining on the part of the bereaved and served as a source of preparatory grief (emotional preparation and expectation of devastating news).

The first news reports focused primarily on the conflagration (Illustrations 3 and 4) and tended to confirm the loss of life. Very little optimism for crash survivors was expressed.

At the same time, however, media accounts provided hope for the bereaved. This was manifested primarily through the highlighting of soldiers who were listed on the plane's manifest, but for one reason or another, missed the flight. (Illustrations 5 and 6)

Evidence suggested that some of the victims' family members maintained hope until official notification because of these reports.

Another Texas family, that of Pfc. Troy Cupples, clung to what his stepfather, David Spear of Porter, called 'a far-off hope' that while Cupples' name was on the manifest, he may not have been on the plane.³

Stage 4, descriptions of depression, or deep grief, (46 observations) were noted throughout the analyzed period, but were greatest December 17, 1985, the day

THE WASHINGTON POST
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1985 A2



Planes carrying American soldiers returning from peace-keeping duty in the Middle East plowed through a wooded area near Gander International Airport, exploded and burned.

The Washington Post, December 13, 1985

Illustration 3

258 ON U.S. TROOP FLIGHT DIE AS PLANE CRASHES IN GANDER ON WAY HOME FROM MIDEAST



Landing gear of crashed DC-4 charter plane burning as rescue workers searched site in Gander, Newfoundland.

The New York Times, December 13, 1985

Illustration 4

Lost Passport Keeps G.I. Off Fatal Flight

LAKE CITY, Fla., Dec. 14 (AP) — His family says it was "God's miracle" that Pfc. Erick Harrington lost his passport and was the only member of his company not allowed aboard a charter flight that crashed in Newfoundland, killing all aboard.

"Clumsy Erick," his mother, Jonnie Harrington, said Friday between joyful tears. "He just misplaced his passport. I'm so happy I don't know what to do."

The chartered DC-8 was carrying 248 soldiers from peacekeeping duty in the Mideast and a crew of eight when it crashed early Thursday.

Mrs. Harrington, 41 years old, and her husband, Cleveland, did not know about their son's good luck until their daughter-in-law, who lives nearby, called them Thursday night. Brenda Harrington, 20, told her in-laws that her 20-year-old husband was stuck in Cairo.

"It was God's miracle," the soldier's mother said. "It was his intent for my son to miss that plane."

Private Harrington is expected to take another flight from Egypt to Fort Campbell, Ky., sometime next week to greet his relatives, including his year-old son, Dewayne.

The New York Times, December 15, 1985

Illustration 5

The Lucky Ones — They Missed the Fateful Flight

From Times Wire Service

The soldier lost his passport, another's reeders disappeared and a third gave up his seat for a comrade. All three thus were spared when the Arrow Air military charter flight crashed Thursday in Canada, killing all 26 aboard.

Clumby Dix. He just misplaced his passport. I'm so happy I don't know what to do," said Jonnie Harrington, mother of Pfc Dix Harrington of Lake City, Fla., who was forbidden to board the plane in Oahu without his passport.

"Well, he's not really that clumsy, but that was a good time to be clumsy," she said.

"It was God's miracle. It was his intent for my son to miss that plane."

Harrington, 20, remained behind in Egypt while 26th Airborne Division's 101st Airborne Division and eight civilian crew members perished when the DC-8 jetliner crashed shortly after takeoff from Gander, Newfoundland.

The plane, bringing the soldiers home to Ft. Campbell, Ky., from peacekeeping duties in the Sinai Peninsula, had landed at Gander for refueling.

Harrington's parents learned Thursday night that he had missed the plane after their son called his wife, Beverly, 20. She said her husband told her he was the only one in his company not to get on the plane and that all his teammates on the unit's basketball squad were killed.

Sgt. Greg Verber, 27, of Trenton, Ark., missed the plane because his military orders were last family members said.

He was mad because he wouldn't be able to make it home for Christmas, his sister Claire said. But somehow, thank God, his orders got lost.

I sat there thinking last night. This is really something to be thankful for," said his father, the Rev. C.K. Verber.

In Kansas City, Mo., the partner of Sgt. Mark Brady heard the news of the plane crash on the radio Thursday and feared for four hours that their son had been killed. Then the phone rung.

I had become desperate and Donna was so distraught," Frank

Brady said of his wife. Donna picked up the telephone, and it was a long distance call from an Army Air Corps base. I heard her scream and I picked up the other phone and it was Mark. Oh, my God.

Mark Brady and another man had volunteered to wait for a later flight when there wasn't enough room for all who wanted to go, his father said.

Apparently some other folks needed to get home. It was either an emergency or they had families, his father said. The other man stayed behind, planning to fly home later, the elder Brady said.

We can't believe our own good fortune, but our hearts go out to all of those other folks.

The Los Angeles Times, December 15, 1985

Illustration 6

following the memorial service attended by President and Mrs. Reagan.

Other observations of this stage were evident primarily after various memorial services, when, in the American society, the expression of such emotions tend to be more frequently publicly displayed and socially acceptable.

It must also be noted that the Army carefully shielded the victims' families from the media and therefore attendance at the public event may have been the first access reporters had with the bereaved.

Acceptance, Stage 5, was the least frequently observed emotion. There were seven observations of this stage in the 117 stories analyzed.

Inferences to the necessity of resolution were first observed December 21, 1985 in a Los Angeles Times story reporting a memorial service conducted at Fort Campbell.

"The intensity of our mourning is only equal to our resolve to meet the challenge of life...."⁴

It is interesting to further note that this story was printed on the last day of continuous coverage by the paper. The timbre of the story lent a type of closure to a long-running story.

The New York Times was the only newspaper of the three to specifically spotlight the healing process, in a story published January 20, 1986. (Illustration 7)

Army Replacing Men Killed in Crash

By RICHARD HALLORAN

Special to The New York Times

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. — The infantry battalion of the 101st Airborne Division that lost nearly a third of its soldiers in an airplane crash in Newfoundland has begun to rebuild.

The new commander, Lieut. Col. Harry E. Rothmann, called the 3d Battalion, 302d Infantry, together in early January to tell them about plans for the next six months. "We are all soldiers," the colonel said, "and we know what we have to do."

In a brief ceremony to symbolize the step into the new year, the colonel read a letter from a Marine officer who had lost colleagues in the terrorist attack in Lebanon in 1983, formally inducted two new company commanders, then led the battalion on a four-mile run.

The battalion had been the main element of the American contingent in an international peacekeeping force in the Sinai and was on the way home when a chartered airliner crashed shortly after taking off from Gander Dec. 12, killing all 256 people aboard.

In soldiers killed, the battalion suffered a catastrophic loss. In combat, casualties of 10 to 15 percent are considered heavy. All together, the battalion lost 187 officers and soldiers, almost a third of the total.

The commander, seven staff officers, two company commanders, the chaplain and the sergeant major, the senior noncommissioned officer, died in the crash. Company A was nearly wiped out, as was the anti-tank platoon of Company D.

A battalion is the basic fighting unit of the Army and Marine Corps. In the 101st, a helicopter assault division, an infantry battalion comprises 40 officers and 650 enlisted men organized into a headquarters, three rifle companies and a weapons company with mortars and anti-tank missiles.

But an infantry battalion depends more on esprit and discipline than on numbers and weapons to become an effective combat force. Soldiers are motivated, said Colonel Rothmann, "by the intangible bonds of trust, loyalty and confidence."

To reconstitute the battalion, Colonel Rothmann reassigned officers and sergeants within the battalion, received others from the brigade of which the battalion is one of three, and was given several from the other two brigades in the division.

He has reassigned eight squads of 9 to 11 soldiers, the smallest units, from other companies to rebuild Company A. That way, Colonel Rothmann said, "we have a battalion that is associated with success in the Sinai."

The brigade commander, Col. John P. Herring, who is supervising the rebuilding, emphasized the common experience of the Sinai mission as a bond. "The whole thing," he said, "is to try to maintain the cohesion of the unit."

Attention to Morale

While the battalion is being retrained, Colonel Herring said, equal attention will be given to morale. "You've got to heal the the spirit as well as the physical wound," he said. "It's going to take a while to get over that loss."

A new chaplain has been named and a psychologist has been assigned to the battalion; both will look for signs of depression or other problems.

Large numbers of rifles, anti-tank weapons and communication gear were lost in the crash, but replacing those is among the least of the battalion's problems. Colonel Herring said most of the weapons would be replaced by the end of February.

Colonel Rothmann, who was the brigade's executive officer before being named battalion commander the day after the crash, held meetings with all leaders in the battalion, down to the squad level, to get ideas for retraining.

"We'll start from the basics," the colonel said, "just as if we were starting a football season. We'll go through the drills and learn the plays again."

In February, the battalion will go to the field for platoon-level exercises. Troops will be trained in air assault tactics and leaders will take part in a command-post exercise to train them in making tactical decisions.

Emphasis Was on Safety

In March, the battalion will stay in garrison to serve guard duty, send soldiers to specialized schools like the noncommissioned officers academy and communications school, and work on shortcomings spotted in the field.

In April, Company A will go to amphibious warfare school to train on its own and to build company cohesion. The battalion will also be given its first tactical evaluation to see if it is ready for combat.

In May, part of the battalion is scheduled to train with forces from other

The New York Times, January 20, 1986

Illustration 7



Sgt. Steven Stone, right, and Specialist 4 Curtis Lilly, center, checking into the 3d Battalion, 502d Infantry, at Fort Campbell, Ky. Sgt. Terry Miley, left, observes the procedure.

services in a joint exercise while one company will go to Fort Irwin, Calif., to act as the adversary for other battalions training there.

A grim irony, Colonel Herring said, was that the 3d Battalion, 502d Infantry, had emphasized safety in its six-month tour in the Sinai. Earlier units had lost soldiers in accidents or drown-

ing, but the worst the battalion had suffered until the crash was a broken leg.

In his first formation with the battalion, Colonel Rothmann said he hoped to set a tone. For that reason, he read to the soldiers the letter from the Marine officer whose battalion was hit by a terrorist attack in Beirut, saying that both battalions "lost people who were per-

forming their duties in the service of the nation."

The marine's letter included a check for \$205 his troops had clipped in for survivors of the soldiers. Letters from all over the country, Colonel Rothmann told the battalion, "reflected recognition from the people of this country that we are their soldiers."

The New York Times, January 20, 1986

Illustration 7 Continued

Since reporting tends to focus on action, emotion, and drama, it is most noteworthy that the story calmly describing a spirit of renewal, was printed.

It is possible that other reporters were developing similar stories, but re-channelled their efforts eight days later when another air disaster, the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger, occurred.

News stories printed in the months following the crash tended to focus on stage two, anger. However, since the media's role is to probe, ask critical questions, and periodically maintain an adversarial role, describing print media as predominantly angry is perhaps presumptuous and inappropriate.

Molotch and Lester wrote that the empirical study of the media is most relevant when accomplished during and immediately following crisis events, when would-be event makers and reporters find themselves outside their traditional, somewhat routinized roles.⁵

For that reason, I refined my analysis and focused primarily on news stories printed the week following the crash (December 13-21, 1985).

During the first week of reporting the accident, the principal focus changed almost daily, in a pattern similar to those identified by Ross and others.

Stories printed on the first day (Figure 7), Friday, December 13, 1985 focused primarily on the shocking

December 13, 1985

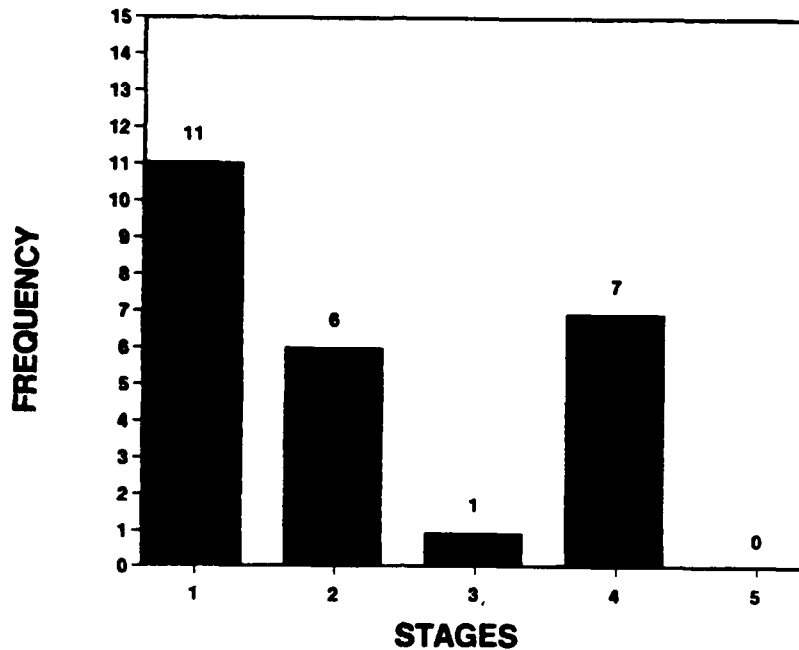


Figure 7

aspects of the accident: the tremendous loss of life, the horrendous extent of the fire that followed the crash, and the jarring, unanticipated changes in the lives of many. (Illustration 8, page 48)

For the most part, stage one behaviors were easily identified. Phrases such as 'quiet disbelief,' 'a sense of shock,' 'it's a blow,' and 'I can hardly believe it' were printed frequently in all three papers. Even the nation's spokesperson, President Reagan, was quoted as being "shocked and saddened" by the disaster.

Instead of the Band and Banners, All-Night Chapels at Ft. Campbell

By JOHN HOLUSHA

Special to The New York Times

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky., Dec. 12 — The banners had been hung in the post gymnasium and the division band was prepared to play at a ceremony welcoming 250 members of the 101st Airborne back from almost six months in Sinai.

But when Col. John P. Herring went before a gathering of about 200 people at 9 this morning, the banners were down and the band instruments still in their cases.

Colonel Herring's message was grim.

Yes, he told them, a plane that crashed in Gander, Newfoundland, was the one that had been chartered to bring their husbands, fathers, fiancés and friends home.

Family Aid Center Set Up

Then, the methods the Army has developed to handle casualties and grief in wartime were put into motion for this unexpected peacetime tragedy. A family assistance center was set up to comfort the relatives of the probable victims, even though positive identification of the dead is not expected before next week.

Two chapels were kept open all night with clergymen available for anyone who wanted to visit.

Officers of the famed airborne division, which has headquarters at this sprawling base in the rolling hills astride the Tennessee-Kentucky border, described the mood on the post as one of "shock and disbelief."

Major Gen. Burton P. Patrick, the commander of the division, spoke in halting tones later in the morning.

"Less Will Be Everlasting"

"We have suffered a tragic loss that will be everlasting," he said, "and our hearts go out to the families and loved ones of these soldiers."

"These soldiers will be missed," he added, "and I love each of them dearly."

Army officials here were advising

relatives of soldiers in the Sinai detachment to call the unit to which they were attached. Those who are identified as relatives will be told if an individual's name was on the list of those designated to take the flight, officials said.

"The families knew there was an air crash due to come in," said Maj. Jupp Gleisberg, a spokesman for the division. "The soldiers had been able to telephone home, so the relatives were waiting."

The tragedy had a major emotional impact on this base of 21,000 soldiers, with 13,000 family members quartered on the post and thousands more scattered around in nearby communities. About 45 percent of those on the plane are believed to have relatives in the area, Army officials said.

Early in the evening, teams of officers and senior noncommissioned officers began to fan out across the base and outside to inform people that their relatives had been scheduled for the flight. The visits were to continue well into the night.

"Normally we stop knocking on doors at 11 P.M. out of consideration for the individuals involved," Major Gleisberg said. "We may extend that a little longer in this situation."

Base officials said 60 local families had been notified that their relatives had been scheduled for the flight. They said a total of 85 had been informed, the extra 25 being people who called in for information.

The entire 1,800-member contingent that had been sent to the Middle East on July 9 was to have been home by Christmas. Earlier groups arrived on Nov. 17 and Dec. 4.

Officials here said the accident was the largest noncombat loss of life for the Army in recent years. They said they would try to maintain the normal operations of the elite division while going through the process of notifying the families of the victims and helping them deal with their loss.

A Christmas concert by the division band, which had been scheduled well in advance, went ahead as scheduled, but Army officials said it was more of a memorial service for those who had been lost than a typical holiday celebration.

The New York Times, December 13, 1985

Illustration 8

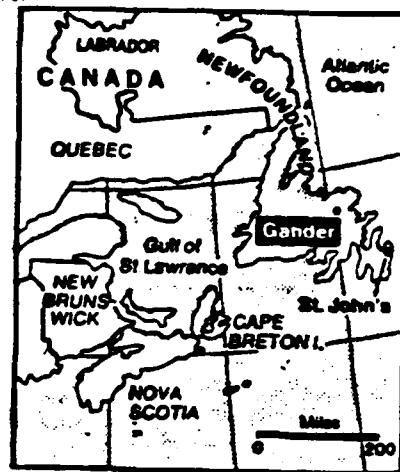
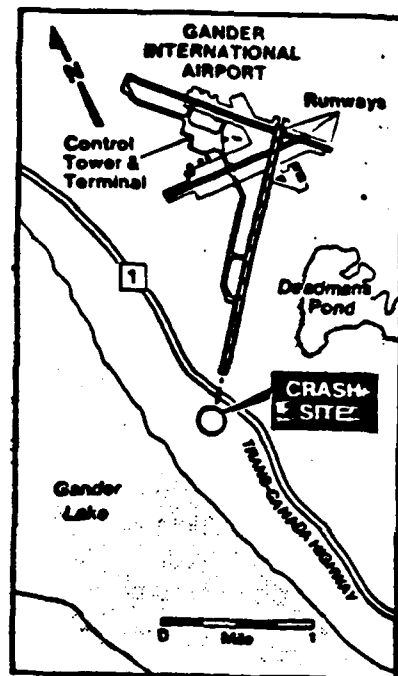
One of the common human responses to crisis is gathering facts and putting them into perspective, much like joining the many pieces of a jumbled jigsaw puzzle. The three newspapers facilitated this response through graphic representations of the events, as if to help answer the question, 'what happened?' (Illustrations 9-11)

Other explanations, also in answer to this query dealt with the journalistic five w's: who the soldiers were, why they were on board this particular flight, and what their mission as part of the multinational force entailed.

Although shock was the primary stage observed, anger, bargaining and depression were also seen.

Anger, especially fault-finding, was primarily observed via speculation of the cause of the crash. Reporters noted that the pilot had not ordered the de-icing of the plane's wings, despite a freezing rain mixed with snow which began approximately 75 minutes before the crash. In addition, other news stories reported that the carrier, Arrow Air, had paid fines totalling \$34,000 for various civil violations.

There was some bargaining observed, but it was limited. The primary emphasis of bargaining was the spotlighting of soldiers who missed the flight and their families' associated joy.

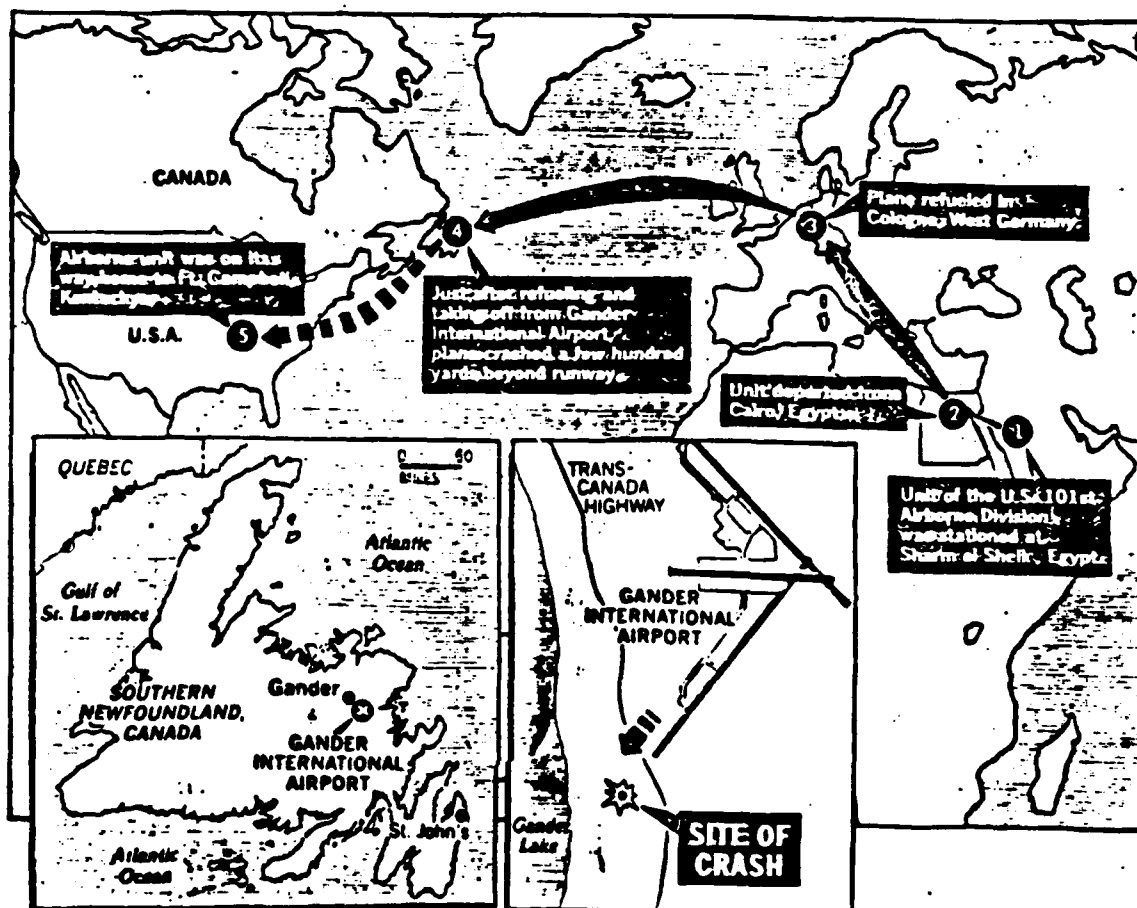


The New York Times / Dec. 13, 1985

Broken line (left) indicates southward route of plane along runway. It crashed less than a mile from the end of the runway, just beyond the Trans-Canada Highway.

The New York Times, December 13, 1985

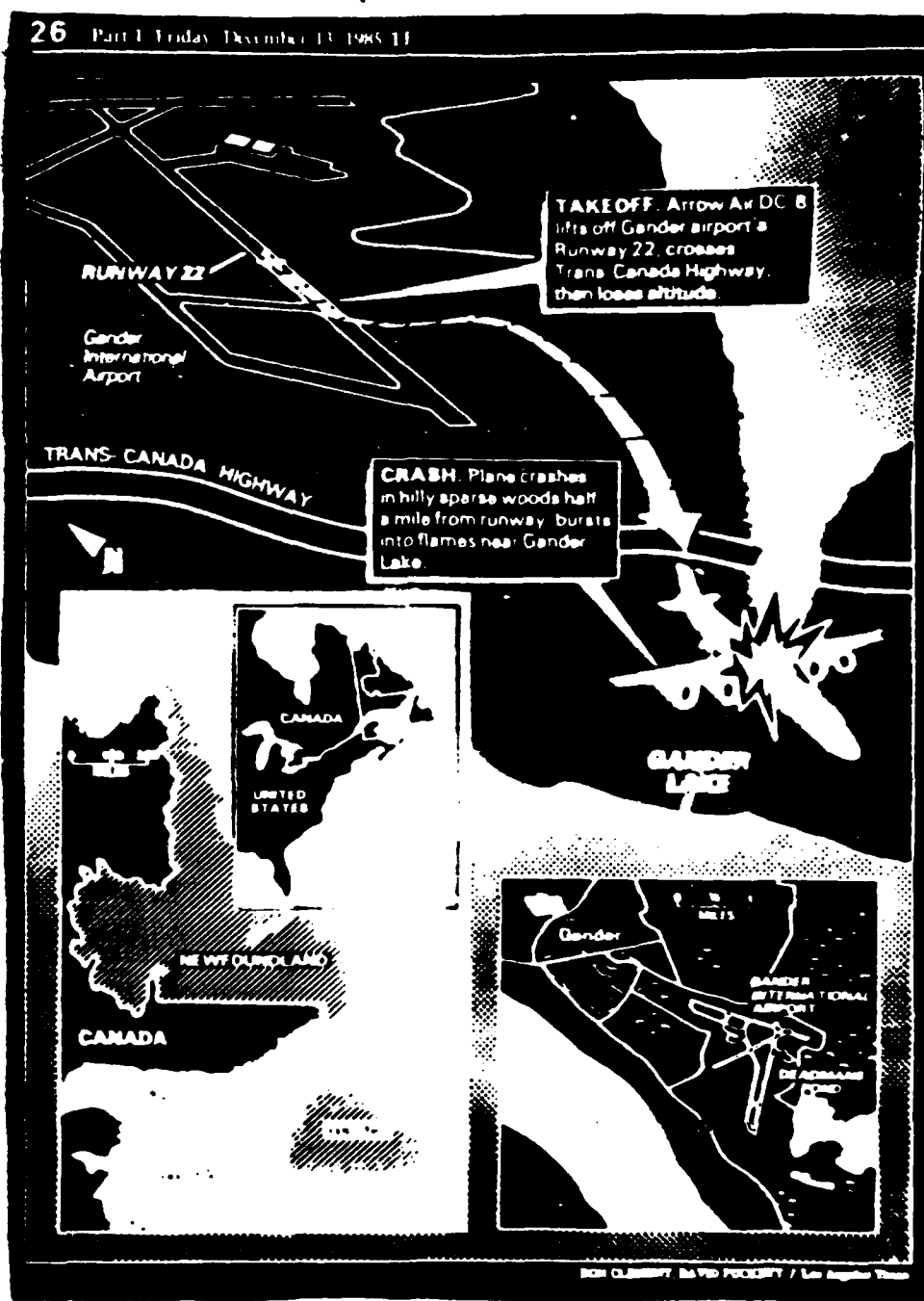
Illustration 9



By Larry Fodor - The Washington Post

The Washington Post, December 13, 1985

Illustration 10



The Los Angeles Times, December 13, 1985

Illustration 11

Deep grief (depression) was also frequently observed. In most of the cases, the families had prior knowledge of their soldiers' presence on the plane. For example, two had expressed great anxiety about the return flight, and one predicted his own death.

A number of other soldiers called their respective families from Gander, Newfoundland. This heightened awareness on the part of the bereaved may have thrust them directly in deep grief.

For example, Michael Wines, a reporter for The Los Angeles Times, recounted one family's brief telephone contact before the crash.

Malinda Parris received a call from her husband, Rudy, at 4 a.m. Thursday from Gander, Canada.

... He said, 'Hi ... I just wanted to talk to you.' Then he had to go because the plane was taking off.

The phone rang again at the Parris home two hours later, with the news that the jetliner had crashed on take-off at Gander and all were presumed dead. Malinda Parris burst into tears. Similar stories were told here Thursday.⁷

On the second day after the accident (figure 8), as the shock began to wear off, the focus of reporting shifted to stage two, anger.

The majority of the anger was not specifically targeted. Some inferences to problems at Arrow Air were made, and the pilot's decision to not have the plane de-iced continued to be questioned, but for the most part

December 14, 1985

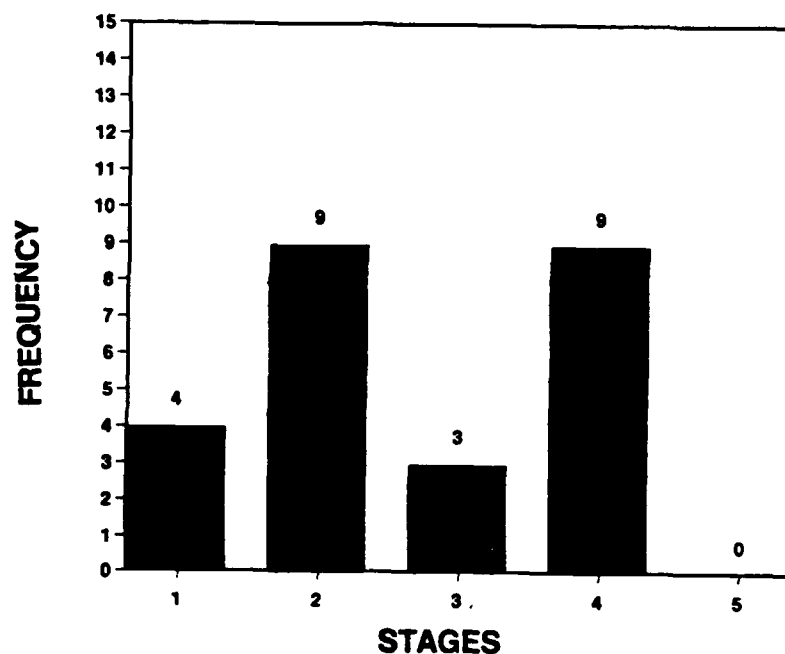


Figure 8

the anger was present, but neither intense nor directive in nature.

For example, The Los Angeles Times quoted a mother who had been worried about her son's assignment in Egypt; "So he survives all that and he gets on a plane to come home and it crashes. It's just not fair."⁸

She was clearly angered at the loss of her son, but at that time, did not direct it toward a particular person or federal agency.

Others, vocalizing similar anger, described an

emotional transition; anger emerging from shock. A father told a Washington Post reporter,

'We're left with disbelief, horror,' said Peter Thornton.

'We're not only asking why this is happening,' he said, 'we're still saying to ourselves: What is happening?'⁹

As it had done the day before, print media spotlighted the "lucky ones" who, for various reasons had missed the flight. On this day, however, the tone was not as optimistic. For example, the "far-off hope" that some missed the flight was expressed, but one such statement was followed by "other families voiced resignation or sought comfort in memories."¹⁰

Stage four, depression, was observed with the same frequency as anger. This may be linked to individual differences of the family members. Many, but not all of the victims' families had already received official confirmation; a critical factor in accepting the loss.

For example, a chaplain at Fort Campbell told a Washington Post reporter that for those who had been notified, little could be done. "There are no right words for a wife who has lost her husband, parents who have lost their son or a child who has lost his mother."¹¹

Stories printed on December 15, 1985, the third day (figure 9), continued to primarily express anger.

Earlier, non-directed anger became more directed, mainly aimed at Arrow Air.

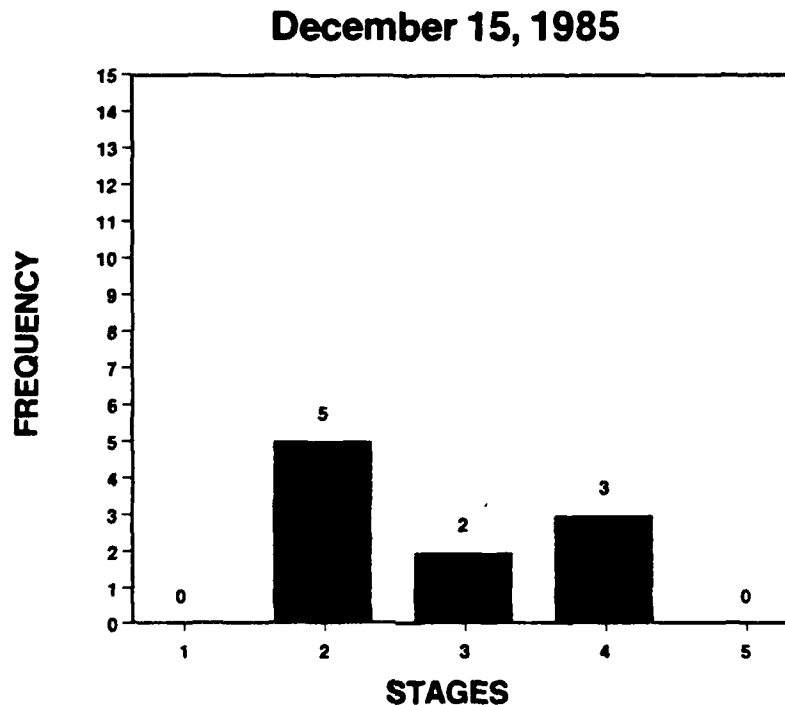


Figure 9

For example, The New York Times reported that the airlines had mechanical difficulties and had been forced to abort two take-offs in the previous six months. The Washington Post reported that the Canadian Aviation Review Board's investigation was paying specific attention to an incident that occurred with the same plane approximately one month before the crash. The Los Angeles Times wrote that Arrow Air had encountered

mechanical difficulties earlier in the year.

During this time the media was trapped in a news vacuum. New information was scarce, much to the frustration of many American reporters. (Illustration 12)

Very little information was provided by the Department of Defense, not necessarily because information was being withheld, but because the Canadian authorities had jurisdiction over the crash investigation, and the United States carefully respected that sovereignty.

This apparent lack of new information may have accounted for the change in positioning of stories related to the accident.

On previous days, the crash was a front page story with numerous side-bars. In contrast, the stories printed in The New York Times were located on pages 21 and 23. There were no photos.

The Los Angeles Times coverage included three news stories (none on the front page), an updated listing of the victim's names and an editorial. One photo was used.

The Washington Post's coverage included one front page story, a list of the victim's names, and an editorial. Once again, there were no photos.

The decreased quantity and intensity of the news stories, though unintended, provided a psychological

Scanty crash information frustrating for reporters

GANDER — Reporters from across North America flocked here Thursday to cover the crash of the DC-8 jetliner. However, frustration was the order of the day for the estimated 350 reporters and technicians as they attempted to uncover details of what caused the loss of 286 lives.

"Is that all we get?" shouted one American reporter after Transport Canada officials held a brief news conference Thursday night.

Two reporters breached security Thursday night at the crash site. They were not charged by security officials after they were apprehended.

However a Transport Canada spokesman warned reporters during a briefing Friday morning that further breaches would not be tolerated.

"If it happens again, security personnel will take the appropriate action," he said.

He didn't identify the two who breached security.

As could be expected in the early stages of a tragedy of such dimensions, the officials had very little to offer about the cause of the crash.

Generally they stuck to short, prepared statements and answered very few questions.

That didn't sit well with the more than 80 reporters who crowed into the briefing room at the airport.

Many reporters were anxious to see the crash site but couldn't until Friday afternoon. A Transport Canada official said the press wasn't allowed on the site until all the bodies were evacuated and all vital evidence removed.



Two Canadian Forces personnel guard the road leading to the site of Thursday's DC-8 jetliner crash

in Gander. Security remains tight and only authorized personnel are being admitted to the area.

Newfoundland Telegram, December 14, 1985

Illustration 12

opportunity for the far-off facts to be assimilated and become near-term reality.

The following day (Figure 10), December 16, 1985, signalled a major change in the tone and focus on news stories. The quantity of stories was significantly reduced, but all three newspapers shared a common focus: stage four, depression and deep grief.

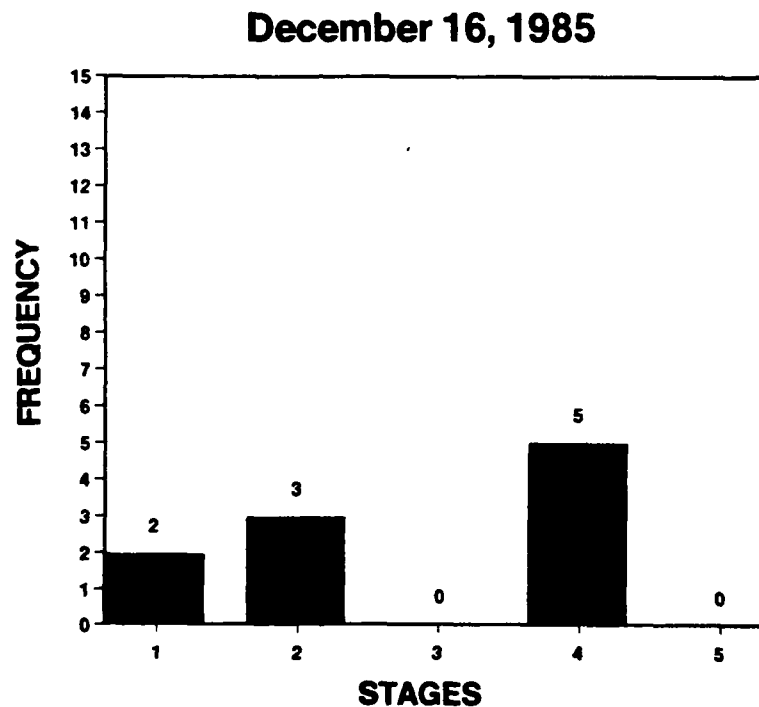


Figure 10

A great deal of the observations were made by reporters attending memorial services; one held in Gander, Newfoundland and one held in Clarkesville,

Tennessee, a small town near Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Many of the outward signs of grief were easily identified. For example, "... some ... cried audibly while others wiped away silent tears."¹²

The transition through various grief stages was also evident. "Now that the initial shock of the crash has passed, the mood of the community here has shifted toward honoring the dead and helping the survivors."¹³

The townspeople of Gander were evidently concerned that the sincerity of their message and the solemnity of the ecumenical gathering might be misinterpreted by the American media.

At the beginning of the memorial service, Gander's mayor, Douglas B. Sheppard said, "This is not a media event, this is a memorial service. ... We are feeling for all those people across the United States who lost their sons and daughters."¹⁴

The decrescendo of the third day had metamorphosed into the beginnings of a new crescendo.

The fifth day (Figure 11), December 17, 1985 was one of intense mourning. (Illustration 13)

The majority of the outward signs were easily observed. 'Sadness,' 'grief,' 'tears,' 'sobs,' 'wailing,' were common, for example. Other signs, such as hand wringing, were not as obvious, though some might interpret the clutching, re-clutching, and fingering of

President Honors Troops Killed in Canadian Crash

By David Hoffman
Washington Post Staff Writer

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky., Dec. 16—President Reagan paid solemn tribute today to the 348 U.S. soldiers who died in the Newfoundland air crash last week and offered solace to their families, saying, "In life they were our heroes, in death our loved ones, our darlings."

"I know that there are no words that can make your pain less, or make your sorrow less general. How I wish there were," Reagan told 700 family members and soldiers who gathered in Hangar 1 here to mourn the lost men and women of the 101st Airborne Division.

"But of one thing we can be sure: as a poet said of other young soldiers in another war, they will never grow old, they will always be young," Reagan said. "And we know one thing with every bit of our thinking—they are now in the arms of God."

As the president spoke in a low voice, emotional but firm, a small child wailed for a lost father, a mother fingered the framed portrait of her son, and a young widow broke into sobs, clutching snap-bags of her late husband, a soldier posing on duty with the U.N. peacekeeping force in the Sinai desert.

Then the president and First Lady Nancy Reagan personally comforted every family member, moving slowly through the hangar for nearly an hour. Reagan greeting them all with both arms outstretched, signing tributes to the fallen soldiers as the division band played solemn hymns. Mrs. Reagan embraced many of the grief-stricken mourners, a white handkerchief grasped tightly in her hand.

It was a scene of agonizing sorrow that brought tears to soldiers of the 101st Airborne "Screaming Eagle" who had come home safely only the week before. Today, they mourned their fallen comrades wearing their tan desert fatigues, some with black armbands, all wearing the distinctive orange patch "Multinational Force and Observers" on one shoulder and the "Screaming Eagle" patch and U.S. flag on the other.

In a ceremony conducted against the backdrop of a mammoth "Screaming Eagle" insignia draped from the hangar ceiling, Maj. Gen. Burton D. Patrick, commander of the 101st, told the families and service personnel:

"As a professional soldier, the only solace that I can take from this tragedy is that if a soldier has to die, it should be in the service of his country, doing a tough and important mission, and it should be with his fellow soldiers. This is how it was."

Retired general William C. Westmoreland and Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger attended the ceremony along with other top military officials. The crash of the Arrow Air DC8 charter at Gander, Newfoundland, last Thursday killed 348 members of Task Force 3/502 and eight airline crew members in one of the worst military air accidents in U.S. history. The soldiers were returning from six months of peacekeeping duty in the Sinai.

"They were full of happiness and laughter as they pushed off from Cairo," Reagan said. "They were happy; they were returning to life and kin. And then the terrible crash, the flags lowered to half staff and the muted sobs and we wonder: How could this be? How could it have happened, and why?"

"We wonder at the stark tragedy of it all, the enormity of the loss. For lost were not only the 348, but all of the talent, the wisdom and the dedication that they had accumulated; but too were their experiences and their enormous dedication."

"Tragedy is nothing new to mankind, but somehow it's always a surprise. It never loses its power to astonish," Reagan said. "Those of us who did not lose a brother or a son or daughter or friend or father are shaken nonetheless."

At the rear of the hangar, Mrs. Ellen Kubic held a photo of her son, Mark R. Kubic, 25, of Brooklyn Park, Minn., who died in the crash. "He had been at President Reagan's first inaugural as an honor guard," she said, "and now the president is coming to honor him."



A soldier's widow weeps in President Reagan's arms at yesterday's service.

The Washington Post, December 17, 1985

Illustration 13

objects as such (I did not).

December 17, 1985

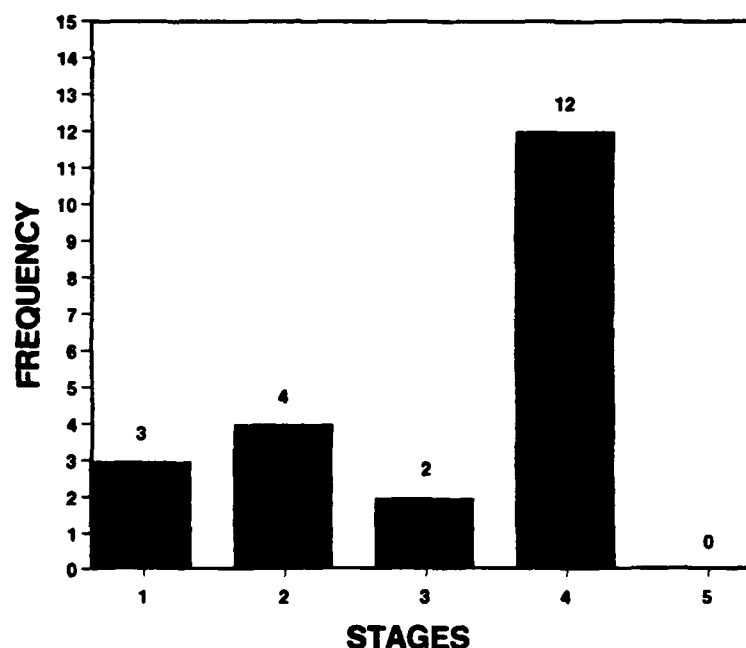


Figure 11

Emotions were great at the ceremony for several reasons. For many surviving family members, this gathering was their first contact with other survivors after the accident. For others, who went to Kentucky from their homes throughout the United States, it was their first ever and perhaps only contact.

The presidential presence also played a key role in the reporting. A great part of the newsworthiness of the stories, hinged on his attendance at the service. Nearly

all of the photographs showed President or Mrs. Reagan embracing family members. (Illustrations 14-16)

Anger was expressed by some of the surviving family members. Christine Manion, the wife of one of the company commanders in the 101st, was perhaps the most vocal. (Illustration 17)

The fact that shock and bargaining was observed is insignificant. The news story in which these characteristics were seen reported the reactions of an Egyptian family who had befriended one of the soldiers. The response was remarkably similar to those expressed in the United States, the day following the crash.

Armanious, a customs inspector, at first did not want to accept that 'Mr. Abe,' as the family called him, was dead. 'Mr. Abe lived near Canada,' he said in broken English, 'so maybe he got off there.'¹⁵

It appears that some reporters or editors carefully avoided some of the emotion of the ceremony, perhaps due to concern about potential sensationalism. For example, throughout the memorial service, a young child cried for his father. The Los Angeles Times reported: "Adding a special poignancy to the Christmas tragedy, a toddler cried, 'I want my Daddy,' throughout the ceremony...."¹⁶



The New York Times/Alan Kravitz
President Reagan and his wife, Nancy, embracing relatives of crash victims at ceremony at Fort Campbell, Ky.

The New York Times, December 17, 1985

Illustration 14



BY KAY LLOYD—THE WASHINGTON POST

At memorial service at Fort Campbell, Ky., President and Mrs. Reagan console families of 101st Airborne soldiers killed in Newfoundland crash.

The Washington Post, December 17, 1985

Illustration 15



FORT CAMPBELL SERVICE — President Reagan meets with family members of Fort Campbell soldiers killed in a plane crash near Gander, Newfoundland, during a memorial service at Fort Campbell Monday.

The New York Times, December 17, 1985

Illustration 16

Widow Says Army Officer Feared Plane's Condition

CLARKSVILLE, Tenn., Dec. 16 (AP) — The widow of an Army officer killed in the crash of a chartered jetliner in Canada says her husband was fearful of the plane's condition before he and other military personnel boarded it.

The officer, Capt. Edward J. Manion, was one of 248 soldiers killed Thursday when an Arrow Air DC-9 crashed after takeoff from Gander International Airport on its way to Fort Campbell, Ky., from the Middle East. Eight crew members also died.

"He told me, 'I'm going to survive the Sinai but I'm not going to survive the trip home on the plane,'" Christine Manion said in a telephone interview Sunday night from her home in Fort Campbell. "My husband called me 46 hours before he left and told me he had no confidence in that plane. It made me physically sick."

Mrs. Manion said her husband told her he had heard that the plane that was to take them home "was all screwed up and having many problems."

"They also had such a bad reputation," she said,

referring to Arrow Air. "Their planes had broken down so many times. They were always delayed and there were so many problems."

Officials of Arrow Air, in Miami, have declined to comment on the crash while an investigation is under way. An airline spokesman, Robin Mattell, has said only, "This is the first fatality we've had."

Mrs. Manion said her husband, who had finished a five-month tour of duty with the 11-nation peace-keeping force in the Sinai peninsula and was returning to the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, was distraught when she talked to him by telephone before the flight.

"He broke into tears and cried, and all I know is he's not a person to be frightened," she said. "It was like he was saying goodbye forever. It tore him apart."

Mrs. Manion said she would miss today's ceremony at which President Reagan and his wife, Nancy, meet the victims' families.

"The only thing that will make me feel better is to see a change" in the way the Army uses charter

planes, she said.

When Captain Manion left for the Sinai last summer, Mrs. Manion said, he boarded an Arrow Air DC-10 "that was so bad it's a miracle they got there."

"I was standing on the main strip and watching that plane barely get off the ground. It was shaking and wavering so badly," she said. "We were so sure it wasn't going to make it off the ground."

Mrs. Manion said she had received "calls from all over the country from both active-duty and retired people, begging me to help by saying these things."

Television networks Sunday night played a tape recording from one of the victims, Specialist 4 Jeff S. Kee of Pensacola, Fla., that complained about the aircraft chartered by the military.

Specialist Kee, in a tape sent from Egypt to his fiancée, Tracy Walker of Hopkinsville, Ky., said, "I just hope everything goes all right. I hope the plane gets back all right, 'cause the plane we fly on is really bad."

The New York Times, December 17, 1985

Illustration 17

In contrast, Washington Post staffer David Hoffman wrote, "... a small child wailed for a lost father....",¹⁷ while the incident was not at all mentioned in the New York Times.

In the days that followed, stage two, anger was the predominant stage observed.

Most remarkably, it was the only stage observed December 18 and 19 (Figures 12 and 13). According to the Army's After-Action Report, this change of focus signalled the "beginning of [the] end of [the] media honeymoon. Subsequently media angle shifts to allegations that the military is seeking to evade responsibility."¹⁸

During this phase of analysis, the distinction between fault-finding and blame (Chapter 3, figures 4 and 5) became quite useful. There was substantial evidence that the nature of the expressed anger had changed.

Earlier expressions of anger, for the most part, were not directive. After the memorial service, anger was directed toward specific organizations.

Some of this directed anger (blame) was inferred by pointing to earlier failures or errors of the pilot, the

December 18, 1985

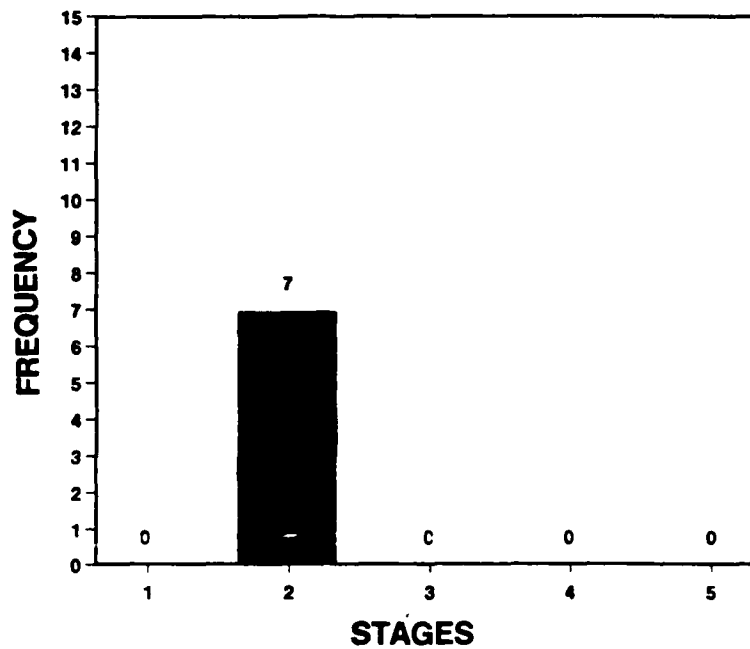


Figure 12

December 19, 1985

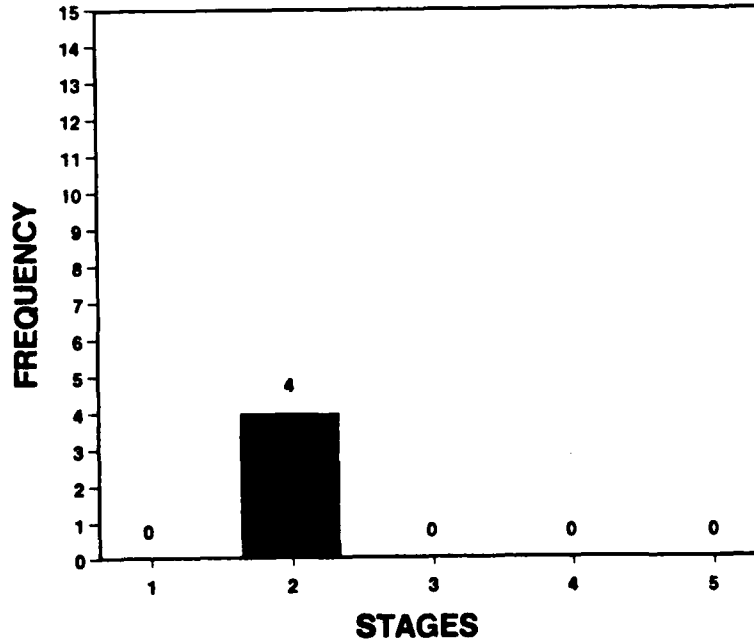


Figure 13

airline, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Army and the use of civilian charters for military transport. In other cases, blame was outright, and more often than not, via quoted sources.

The Los Angeles Times editor, Otis Chandler, wrote that the Department of Defense should take a stronger role in the selection of civilian carters rather than relying on the FAA. "It's not good enough," he wrote.¹⁹

Coverage on December 20 and 21 was limited to The New York Times and The Los Angeles Times.

There was no singular focus in stories printed December 20, 1985 (Figure 14), but stage five,

STAGE FIVE: THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TAKES A STRONGER ROLE IN THE SELECTION OF CIVILIAN CARTERS RATHER THAN RELYING ON THE FAA.

December 20, 1985

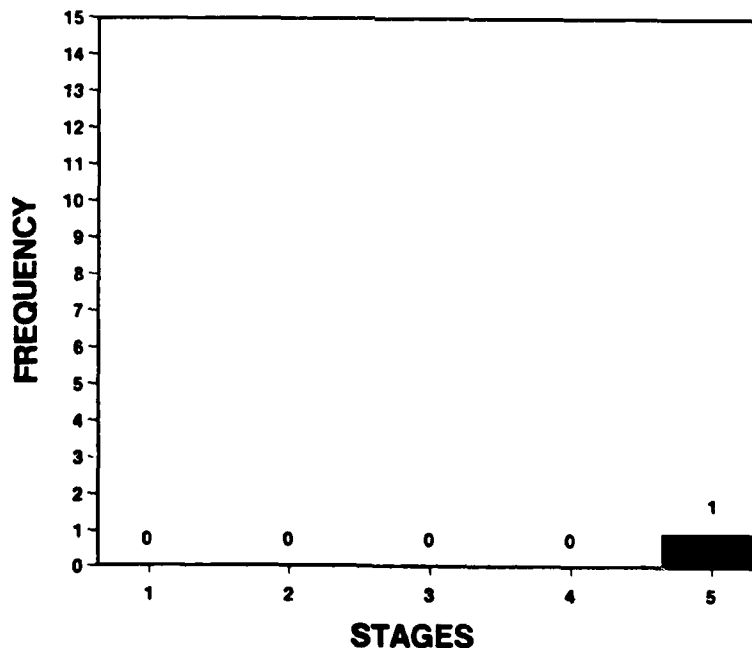


Figure 14

STAGE FIVE: THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TAKES A STRONGER ROLE IN THE SELECTION OF CIVILIAN CARTERS RATHER THAN RELYING ON THE FAA.

acceptance, was observed in a New York Times story.

"We're all philosophical about what happened ... life goes on."²⁰

On the final day of continuous coverage (Figure 15), both newspapers covered a memorial service held at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

The Los Angeles Times focus was stage five, acceptance. The tone of the story was one of resolve.

"The intensity of our mourning is equal only to our resolve to meet the challenge of life. We dedicate ourselves anew...."²¹

TABLE 15-1: STAGES OF GRIEF COVERED BY THE NEWSPAPERS

December 21, 1985

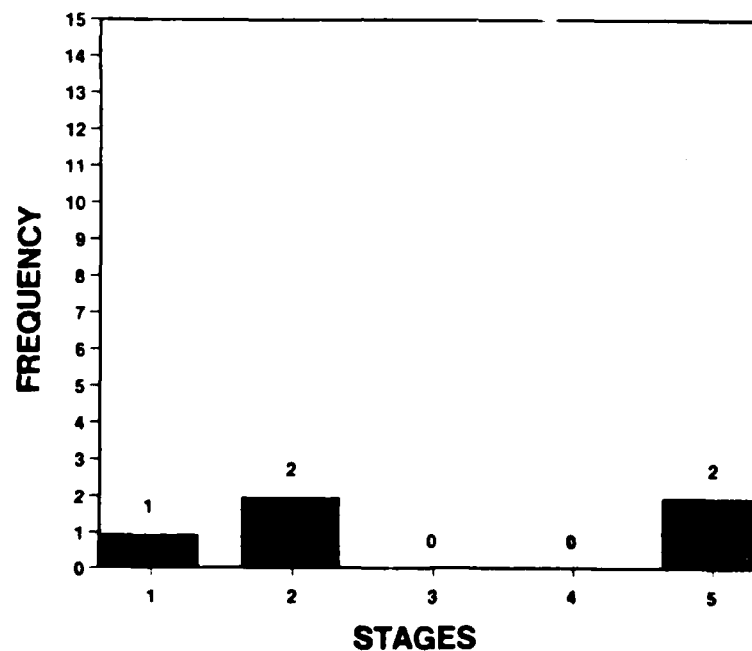


Figure 15

TABLE 15-2: STAGES OF GRIEF COVERED BY THE NEWSPAPERS

The New York Times report of the ceremony was more somber. "We often take for granted the quiet, unsung duties of others who perform for us. Then tragedy strikes and it shocks us into awareness...."²⁰

Anger was strongly expressed in the last paragraph of the story. "'It's hard to take,' he said. 'If anyone is responsible, it's someone in the airline industry. If they are culpable, they should be punished.'"²¹

Figure 16 shows the movement from stage to stage during the period of continuous coverage by the print media.

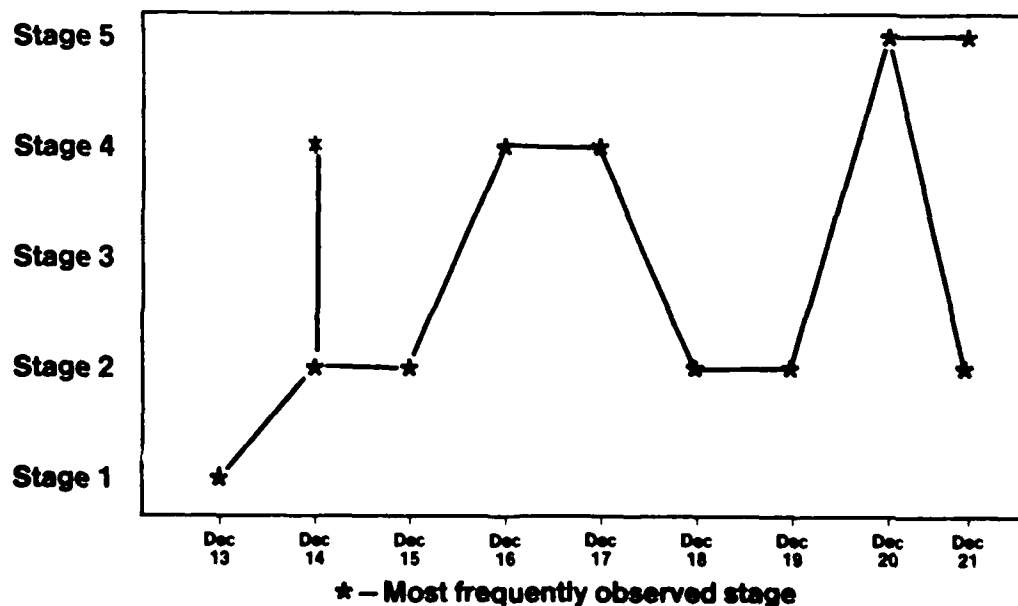


Figure 16

The frequent return to stage two, anger, may simply reflect the nature of journalism; i.e., to identify problems and find causes. Journalists are conditioned to probe for explanations, even if the role becomes adverse in nature.

Hypothesis 2

"Emotions reflecting anger will be most intense after the remains of all the victims have been identified and returned to the next-of-kin."

There was no marked increase in the reporting of Stage 2, anger, after the remains of all the victims were identified, February 25, 1986.

This may be due, in part, to the process of identification. For many, the waiting proved to be very stressful. The identification of remains and subsequent interment may have signaled closure.

In addition, individual soldiers were identified singly, one at a time. Although each soldier's story may have been the subject to coverage on a local level, it apparently was not considered unique enough to be newsworthy by the three newspapers.

For example, Christine Manion, whose husband Captain Edward J. Manion died in the crash, continued to crusade for changes in the military charter system after her spouse was buried. By her own admission, she was not ready to grieve, until appropriate actions were taken. (Illustration 18)

NEWSMAKERS

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH PEOPLE IN THE HEADLINES

Charter crash widow leads fight for safety

Saying "no" to Christine Manion only makes her angry.

And today, as she heads into meetings with lawmakers, military officers and other government officials on the Arrow Air tragedy, she's plenty angry.

Manion, 35, lost her husband, Capt. Edward Manion, 28, when a chartered troop transport crashed Dec. 12 in Gander, Newfoundland, killing 248 soldiers.

"We just can't let those men die in vain," Manion said.

Among the goals of the 30 relatives of crash victims Manion leads into today's meetings: improved safety standards for planes transporting military personnel and allowing soldiers to refuse to travel on planes they consider unsafe.

Years of study in ballet and martial arts prepared her for the battle: "I've learned that

anything you set your mind to, you can do," said Manion.

"She's the pivotal point," said Sandy McCormick, of Bristol, Tenn., whose son, 2nd Lt. Scott McCormick, 24, worked under Capt. Manion.

Manion started the campaign when she sent letters to the families of her husband's company in January.

"I thought one of the fathers would take over and get involved, but it never happened," said Manion.

The only organizing she'd done before was at Miss Tina's School of Ballet in Franklin, Tenn.

"Getting involved" has cost her: last month's phone bill was \$720. And she's made enemies at Fort Campbell, Ky., where her husband was based.

So she's moving soon to near-by Clarksville, Tenn., with her



By Jane Ross, USA TODAY

CARRYING ON: Christine Manion will carry pennant of her husband's unit to meetings with officials investigating Gander crash.

daughter from her first marriage, Thais, 17.

She married Capt. Manion on Aug. 1, 1984. She still wears his white gold wedding band.

"I always made my husband

a promise that anything he couldn't finish, I would. When this is finished, I can get on with my grief."

—Steve Marshall

USA Today, March 19, 1986

Illustration 18

Hypothesis 3

"The number and length of news stories will diminish over time and stop; however, the media will again focus on the event on or about the anniversary of the crash."

The greatest number of stories appeared immediately following the crash and remained relatively high the first five days that followed.

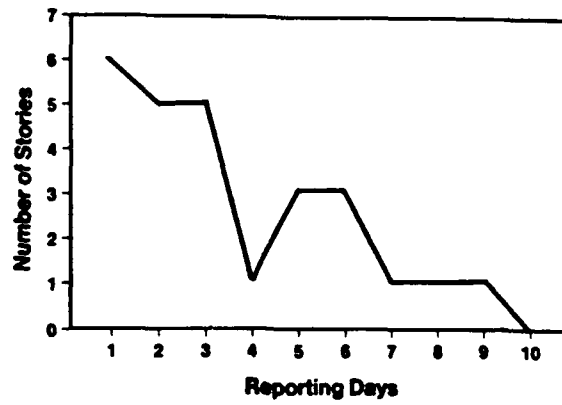
Both the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times had nine days of continuous coverage, The Washington Post, seven. (Figure 17)

Thereafter, news stories were sporadic and varied. There were only two other days, January 10, 1986 and February 5, 1986, when news stories relating to the crash were printed by each of the three newspapers. There was, however, no singular focus; each newspaper covered different aspects of the crash.

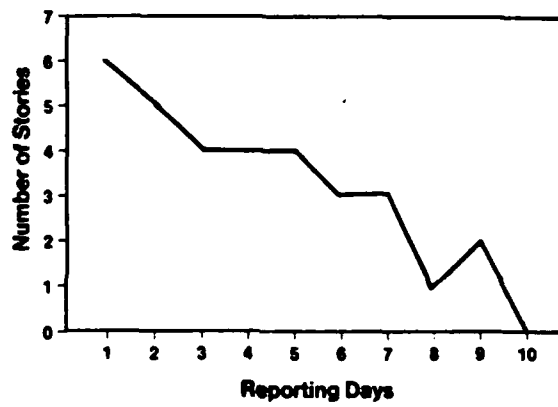
Since anniversary reporting is a common practice in journalism and very much a part of grief recovery, it would seem then that a story recounting the accident would appear on or about the anniversary of the disaster. Surprisingly, there were none.

This may be due to the lack of a declared cause of the crash by the Canadian Aviation Safety Board. The media cannot yet provide resolution to the disaster.

The Los Angeles Times



The New York Times



The Washington Post

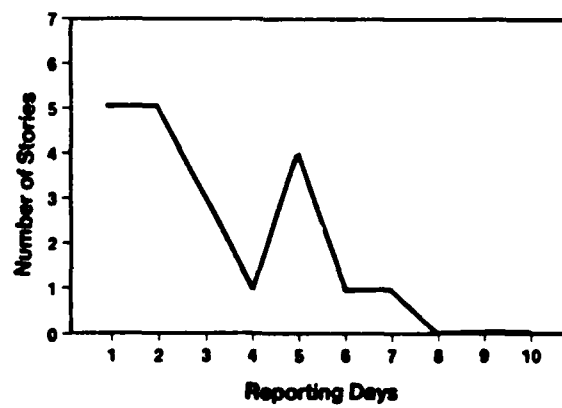


Figure 17

The lack of anniversary reporting might also reflect journalist conventions; i.e., since the accident took place in Canada and not the United States, it is not 'newsworthy.'

For example, the media often focuses on similar disasters as part of the story line. In 1987, after a jet crashed in Detroit, Michigan, The Washington Post published a list of the ten worst air crashes. (The measurement 'worst' was based on the number of passengers killed.)

Interestingly, the accident in Gander wasn't included because the accident occurred outside the United States. However, the Post published a very similar story December 13, 1985. This story described the crash of the Arrow Air DC-8 as the "eighth worst in aviation history."²²

There was only one story printed near the anniversary of the crash. The story, the last story of the 117 analyzed, was printed in The Washington Post on December 5, 1986. Although nearly one year later, it was more a news story with a time peg than an anniversary story.

The primary focus of the story was the cause of the crash:

After a year-long probe, investigators believe the crash of a military charter plane that killed 248 U.S. soldiers most likely was caused by the crew's failure to clear ice from

the wings before it left Gander, Newfoundland, according to Canadian and U.S. sources.

The Canadian Aviation Safety Board findings are not expected to be released until late spring or early summer of next year [1987].

Footnotes

¹Bill Peterson, "Mourning, Not a Welcoming," The Los Angeles Times, December 13, 1985, p. 1.

²Polly Doyle, Grief Counseling and Sudden Death: A Manual and Guide, (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1980), p. 24.

³-----, "For One Mother, Sudden Loss Leaves Her 'Tricked, Robbed,'" The Los Angeles Times, December 14, 1985.

⁴Chaplain Bernard Nass, spoken at a memorial held at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Reported in The Los Angeles Times, December 21, 1985, p. 6.

⁵Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "News As Purposive Behavior: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents, and Scandals," American Sociological Review, 39 (1974): 109.

⁶Michael Wines, "Husband Says 'Hi' From Gander but Bad News Follows," pp. 4 and 28.

⁷Herbert H. Denton, "Troop Plane Crashes, 258 Dead," The Washington Post, December 13, 1985, pp. 1 and 13.

⁸Mary Kosh, speaking to an Associated Press reporter, reported in The Los Angeles Times, December 14, 1985, p. 34.

⁹Chris Spolar, "Accident Kills Family's Holiday Joy," The Washington Post, December 14, 1985, p. 14.

¹⁰Ibid, "For One Mother, Sudden Loss Leaves Her
'Tricked, Robbed,'" p. 34.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²John Holusha, "Town Gathers in Mourning Soldiers
Lost in Plane Crash," The New York Times, p. B15.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Christopher S. Wren, "The Townspeople of Gander
Grieve For G.I.'s as They Would Their Own," The New York
Times, December 16, 1985, p. B14.

¹⁵Michael Ross, "Crash Victims Mourned in Sinai
Service," The Los Angeles Times, December 17, 1985,
p. 16.

¹⁶Eleanor Clift, "Reagan Leads Somber Tribute to
Crash Dead," The Los Angeles Times, December 17, 1985,
p. 1.

¹⁷David Hoffman, "President Honors Soldiers Killed
in Canadian Crash," The Washington Post, December 17,
1985, p.1.

¹⁸U.S. Army After Action Report, undated, p. 17.

¹⁹Otis Chandler, "It's Not Good ENough,"
(Editorial), The Los Angeles Times, December 18, 1985,
p. 10.

²⁰James Barron, "Troops Welcome Switch to U.S. Jets
for Trip Home," The New York Times, December 20, 1985,
p. 21.

²¹-----, "Howitzers Thunder a 248 Gun Salute to

Soldier Crash Victims," The Los Angeles Times, December 21, 1985, p. 6.

²²James Barron, "Thousands Pay Tribute to Soldiers Killed in Jet," The New York Times, December 21, 1985, p. 8.

²³Ibid.

²⁴-----, "'85 Aircraft Toll Is Record," (Reuters), The New York Times, December 13, 1985, p. 27.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This study shows that media reports of a shocked, angry, and saddened society in the aftermath of a disaster correspond with patterns of predictable human responses and are not necessarily the sensationalized product of an adversarial press.

The analysis revealed that print media reports of the Arrow Air jetliner crash in Gander, Newfoundland followed a pattern similar to patterns observed in grief recovery. The pattern was primarily evident during the first nine days following the accident.

Stage 1, shock, was the first stage observed. It was, however, seen briefly and only after initial reports of the accident and tended to appear concurrently with stage three, bargaining.

When the recovery of the body is delayed, as in drownings or accidents similar to the crash in Gander, Newfoundland, thanatologists report that this stage and grief recovery, as well, is often repeated after the victims' remains are interred. This was not observed.

Instead, Stage 2, anger, was more frequently seen. Throughout the analyzed content it continued to appear, even though the main focus of the coverage moved from

stage to stage. The continued presence of this stage, I believe, is not the outgrowth of a biased press, but rather, the product of the print media's probing nature.

For example, the anger expressed immediately after the crash differed significantly from the anger observed in news stories printed several months thereafter. The anger that was observed immediately following the crash more closely followed a human pattern rather than the conventions of journalism.

Stage 3, bargaining, was the only stage observed out of the expected sequence. It tended to occur simultaneously with stage one observations; much like a surprise within a surprise, or calm in the midst of disaster.

Observations of bargaining were reduced, I believe, by the media's presence. First person accounts of the disaster vividly explained the extent of the fire and photographs of the plane, still burning hours after the crash, painted a very pessimistic picture.

In addition, the evidence of bargaining might have been limited because of the nature of the flight's passengers.

For example, many military families prepare themselves psychologically for the loss of a loved one, especially when the assignment is in hostile or potentially hostile areas. This preparatory grief may

have hastened the advent of depression and deep grief.

Observations of Stage 4, depression, were present primarily in stories written about the formal memorial services held at various sites in the United States and Canada. There was a clear event orientation to observations of this stage. However, it is not possible to determine the type or nature of reports that might have been made in the absence of these events.

Stage 5, acceptance, was the least frequently observed emotion, but did occur to some degree in each of the three newspapers.

Although the results of the analysis showed a similarity to the patterns noted in grief recovery, they may be exclusively unique to the crash at Gander, Newfoundland or air disasters in general.

This study should be replicated many times, preferably in the aftermath of the crisis when the process used by both print and electronic media can be observed, and the relationship examined.

In addition, future studies should look at other areas of enquiry. Does reporting change, for example, in non-military or less restrictive environments? Do news stories reporting crises outside the United States differ from those reporting crises within the United States? Is there a uniquely American way of reporting grief?

When formulating further conclusions, researchers

must allow for individual differences, since grief recovery varies from person to person and situation to situation. Lily Pincus reminds us that

An individual may repeat stages, skip some, or have stages occur simultaneously. The order, intensity and duration also vary....¹

This study showed that despite individual differences and the conventions of journalism, a human pattern emerged when reporting crisis. These conventions did not disguise the human grief response but rather, revealed it.

The most significant finding in this study, I believe, is lack of strong closure to the disaster in the form of stories focused on stage five, acceptance. Certainly recovery from such a great loss will take time, but recognizing that healing is in process is also important.

The scarcity of optimism and recovery in particular, may be the by-product of journalistic convention. The tendency to focus on conflict, drama, and emotion may cause the media to overlook acceptance. The previously 'hot' story is no longer highly valued and is easily replaced by other, journalistically more important, events.

This tendency might very well be the source of the media's reputation as an insensitive monster with an insatiable appetite for grief stories. For example,

according to C. Fraser Smith, when reporting the terrorist truck bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon,

If a family agreed to be interviewed or sit for photographs, it was soon overrun by photographers and reporters--and for many days. Then press attention ended as abruptly as it had begun. The families discovered that enduring grief is not necessarily enduring news.²

Thus, when everyone else is resolving their grief, the media are already highlighting the next problem, crisis or disaster. New, more urgent problems are more likely to be printed and the concomitant resolution to previous ones dismissed entirely.

The problem with grief reporting then, is not so much that media focus on grief, but how the task is accomplished. Every event has a beginning, a middle and an end. Over time, the beginning and middle are strong components of journalism, but the ending (resolution) all too often, is weak or non-existent. The reader is left with unresolved issues and unresolved grief.

The notion of social responsibility and the press is yet another lengthy subject, but it seems to me, that editors have a responsibility to their readers and society as well, when reporting grief.

The media, as an information source, becomes a functionary in the recovery process. It brings to the forefront evidence of the loss, the factors that led to

it, and sometimes (not often enough) the grieving that follows. To complete the cycle, focus on recovery should become more the norm than the signal of a slow news day.

Public criticism that the media is insensitive is not without merit. By focusing only on the shock and sadness of the loss, the media imparts a skewed sense of reality, hopelessness and helplessness.

Reporters and editors would better serve the public by consciously reporting the denouement of crises as a matter of routine, rather than exception. In so doing, they will more honestly reflect what members of the human race do, feel and think; the primary function of news reporting.

Footnotes

¹Lily Pincus, Death and the Family: The Importance of Mourning. (New York: Pantheon Books [1975 c1974]), p. 123.

²C. Fraser Smith, "Reporting Grief," Washington Journalism Review, 6 (March 1984): 21.

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Appendix

The news stories used for this content analysis are listed chronologically, by date.

The Los Angeles Times

December 13, 1985

-----, "Charter Jet Not De-iced," p. 1.

Penny Pagano and James Gerstenzang, "FAA Cited Airline Deficiencies," p. 26.

Michael Wines, "Husband Says 'Hi' From Gander but Bad News Follows," pp. 4 and 28.

-----, "Pentagon Opens Crisis Phone Lines," p. 28.

Michael Ross, "Troops Never Fired On in 3 1/2 Year Sinai Duty," p. 28.

-----, "Crash Increases Record Toll in Aviation This Year to 1,948," p. 28.

December 14, 1985

Kenneth Freed and Eric Malnic, "Recorder Damage May Hamper Crash Probe," pp. 1 and 32.

-----, "Pentagon, Relatives Supply Partial List of Passengers," p. 33.

David Treadwell, "Reagan to Honor Victims of Crash,"
p. 34.

-----, "For One Mother, Sudden Loss Leaves Her
'Tricked, Robbed,'" p. 34.

James Gerstenzang and Peggy Pagano, "Safety of Small
Airlines Challenged," p. 35.

December 15, 1985

-----, "Ice May Have Caused Plane Crash," p. 1.

-----, "The Lucky Ones--They Missed the Fateful
Flight," p. 4.

James Gerstenzang, "Military Aircraft to Bring Sinai
Soldiers Home," p. 4.

-----, "Additional Names of Passengers in Fatal
Crash," p. 4.

Eric Malnic and Kenneth Freed, "Search Ends for 256
Crash Victims' Remains; Autopsies Planned," p. 5.

December 16, 1985

Eric Malnic and David Treadwell, "U.S. and Canadian
Towns Grieve Over Crash Victims," p. 5.

December 17, 1985

Eleanor Clift, "Reagan Leads Somber Tribute to Crash
Dead," p. 1.

Eric Malnic, "Airlift Begins to Bring Home Crash

Victims' Remains," p. 13.

Michael Ross, "Crash Victims Mourned in Sinai Service," p. 16.

December 18, 1985

Eric Malnic, "Engine Part Possible Clue in Jet Crash," pp. 1 and 8.

James Gerstenzang, "Air Force Defends Charter Use, Arrow Air Safety," p. 9.

Otis Chandler, "It's Not Good Enough," (Editorial), p. 30.

December 19, 1985

-----, "Last Group of 101st Returns," p. 1.

December 20, 1985

-----, "Congress OKs Aid for Families of Soldiers Killed on Air Crash," p. 26.

December 21, 1985

-----, "Howitzers Thunder a 248-Gun Salute to Soldier Crash Victims," p. 26.

December 23, 1985

-----, "Troop Carrier Had Big Financial Losses But U.S. Regulators Say an Airline Need Not Be Solvent to

Be Safe," p. 23.

-----, "Toy Drive Organized for Children of
Crash Victims," p. 23.

January 3, 1986

-----, "FAA Chief Calls 1985 One of Aviation's
Safest Years," p. 31.

January 10, 1986

----- Kenneth Freed, "Reversal of Power Not Cause of
Gander Crash, Canada Says," p. 7.

February 5, 1986

-----, 17-line story in "The World," p. 2.

February 26, 1986

-----, 17-line story in "The World," p. 2.

March 7, 1986

Robert L. Jackson, "Panel Told Arrow Air Routinely
Delayed Maintenance," p. 34.

October 13, 1986

-----, "Arrow Air Sues Pentagon Over Contract
Ban," p. 32.

The New York Times

December 13, 1985

John Holusha, "258 On U.S. Troops Flight Die As Plane crashes in Gander On Way Home From Mideast," p. A1.

Douglas Martin, "Cause is Uncertain," p. A1.

-----, "G.I.'s Kept Watch in Sinai," p. 1.

Christopher S. Wren, "Officials Are Wary on the Cause of the Crash," p. A14.

Richard Witkin, "Airline Was Penalized in '84 Inspection," p. A14.

Roberto Suro, "After all Hope Is Gone, the Search Goes On," p. A15.

December 14, 1985

Christopher S. Wren, "Clues Are Sought to Crash That Killed 256 in Gander," pp. A1 and A4.

Roberto Suro, "A Lost Album of Photos in the Snows of Gander," p. A4.

Richard Witkin, "Experts Lack Solid Clues on Cause of Crash," p. A4.

Michael R. Gordon, "Sinai Force Halts Use of Airline," p. A4.

-----, "Victims of the Airline Crash in Newfoundland," p. A4.

December 15, 1985

-----, "U.S. Autopsies Set for Crash Victims,"
p. A23.

-----, "Airline Confirms Jet Had Problems
Before Crash," p. A21.

-----, "Soldiers on Chartered Jet That Crashed
in Gander," p. A22.

-----, "Travel Brought Prosperity to Gander,"
p. A22.

December 16, 1985

-----, "A Complete List of Military Dead in
Gander Crash," p. B14.

Christopher S. Wren, "The Townspeople of Gander
Grieve For G.I.'s as They Would Their Own," p. B14.

Douglas Martin, "Force of Jetliner Crash at Gander
Complicates Investigators' Work," p. B14.

John Holusha, "Town Gathers in Mourning Soldiers
Lost in Plane Crash," p. B15.

December 17, 1985

Francis X. Clines, "'Love Is Never Lost,' Reagan
Tells Crash Victims' Grieving Families," pp. A1 and B8.

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